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Cover picture

Nangahat province, Afghanistan: Judah Passow's photograph of a young injured and a wrecked Russian armoured personnel carrier.

## A time of confrontation and confusion

John Lewis Gaddis

WALTER ISAACSON and EVAN THOMAS  
*The Wise Men: Six friends and the world they made*  
833pp, Faber, £15.95.

HUGH THOMAS  
*Armed Truce: The beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946*  
667pp, Hamish Hamilton, £14.95.

BRADLEY F. SMITH  
*The War's Long Shadow: The Second World War and its aftermath: China, Russia, Britain, America*  
319pp, André Deutsch, £9.95.

ROBIN EDMONDS  
*Setting the Mould: The United States and Britain 1945-1950*  
349pp, Oxford: Clarendon, £25.

THOMAS T. HAMMOND (Editor)  
*Witnesses to the Origins of the Cold War*  
319pp, Seattle: University of Washington Press, \$17.50.

Writing history is an oddly schizoid activity. It involves imposing upon the past, but also stripping away from it, layers of retrospective interpretation. It aims to reconstruct "what actually happened", but it goes about this in apparently contradictory ways: by allowing preoccupations of the present to determine what we find relevant from the past, so that history becomes a device for explaining how we got to where we are; but also by rejecting such "presentism" on grounds that those who made history can hardly have had our concerns uppermost in their minds when they did so. To say that the past affects the present but that the present affects only our perception of the past is to point out an obvious asymmetry. But the corollary principle that time, so far as we know, flows only in one direction - and we now have Professor Stephen Hawking's tentative confirmation that it does - has not impressed itself upon historians as much as one might think.

Consider the extent to which even so recent a historical event as the coming of the Cold War has been burdened by, and then liberated from, a whole range of interpretative encrustations. Thirty years ago, if one had asked how the great rivalry between Moscow and Washington had come about, historians free to

say what they thought (which is to say those in the West) would almost certainly have answered as follows: that the Soviet Union's persistent distrust of its British and American allies, a distrust rooted deeply in ideology, historical experience, and, in the person of its leader, abnormal psychology, had dissipated the goodwill the Russians had won by carrying the main burden of the war against Hitler, had therefore prevented wartime co-operation from extending beyond victory, and so had forced the West, in the end, hesitantly and reluctantly to rearm itself.

Twenty years ago the explanation would have been very different: historians writing on this subject in the mid-1960s would probably have suggested that American belligerence towards the Russians, a belligerence based on the well-known tendency of mature capitalism to produce drives for world-wide economic domination, had denied the Soviet Union the security it had legitimately earned during the war, had taken advantage of a temporary monopoly over atomic weapons to intimidate that country, had enlisted - or co-opted, or bludgeoned - other Western states into participating in this enterprise, and so had forced an exhausted, inoffensive but still resolute Russia, hesitantly and reluctantly, to take the measures necessary to defend itself.

Ten years ago historians of the Cold War would have come down somewhere in between these two extremes: there had been legitimate reasons in the West for fearing Soviet expansionism, they would have explained, but that expansionism in fact had been unlikely; the Russians too had had reason to fear American intentions, even though in retrospect those fears also had been benign. The Cold War had now come to be seen as an unfortunate misunderstanding, for which neither side was really to blame.

I have sketched these shifts in interpretation as sharper than they were in practice, but not by much. The gradual opening of new source materials in the West helps only in part to account for them: the contrasts were too extreme; the revisionism - and counter-revisionism - were too ardently pursued simply to have reflected what was available in the archives at each point. In fact, a kind of "reverse-Hawking" principle was at work here as well: events taking place at the time historians were writing - the suppression of the Hungarian revolt, or the Vietnam War, or the rise of détente - affected their interpretation of events they were writing about, with the result

that time, in a sense, did flow backwards. The present coloured what was remembered - and what those too young to remember were taught to think - about the past. The Cold War had become a kind of screen, on to which historians projected contemporary concerns.

Not surprisingly, survivors from the late 1940s found the ensuing light-show a bewildering experience, one that coincided only sporadically with their own first-hand memories of what had transpired. "We were there", they would patiently remind younger scholars who dutifully invited them to comment on each successive revision of Cold War history, "and you must have been about three at the time."

There was a good deal of force in this. In their zeal to hurl interpretations and counter-interpretations at one another, historians of the Cold War had lost sight of an equal responsibility, which was to reconstruct - and relate to the process of retrospective explanation - the way things looked at the time. What was needed, their critics thought, was the historiographical equivalent of an archaeological dig: an effort to recapture particularities underlying accumulated strata of generalization; a liberation of our understanding of Cold War origins and the individuals who figured in them from the foolish but surprisingly widespread assumption that these men somehow knew what they were letting us in for, and ought, therefore, to have been more careful.

The books under review here provide welcome evidence that particularity is becoming acceptable once again. Significantly, only one of them has been prepared by a full-time academic historian: it sometimes takes "outsiders" to remind the "professionals" of what they should be about.

Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas are editors at *Time* and *Newsweek* respectively. Their well-written book, *The Wise Men*, is a rediscovery of the role distinctive personalities played in shaping post-war American foreign policy. It takes the form of a collective biography of six men - Dean Acheson, Charles E. Bohlen, W. Averell Harriman, George F. Kennan, Robert A. Lovett and John J. McCloy - whom the authors describe, with roughly the same degree of understatement Acheson managed when he entitled his own memoirs *Present at the Creation*, as "Architects of the American Century"; they were "the original brightest and best, men whose outsized personalities and forceful actions brought order to the post-war chaos and left a legacy that dominates American policy to this day".

Even if one accepts the hyperbole - eodem, it seems, when journalists write history - there are certain difficulties with the book. The authors' choice of subjects would have provoked criticism however they had done it, but one notices particularly the absence of Paul Nitze, a man whose influence has at least equalled that of the others for at least as long, and who should have been given more than the peripheral treatment he is accorded here. Nor does the inclusion of Kennan seem quite right: his views had a profound impact on early American Cold War policy, to be sure, but for much of its subsequent history he has been one of that policy's most searching critics. Nor are the major protagonists delineated in as careful a manner as one might like: the six are used too often as foils for one another, with the result that each comes across tagged with one or two Homeric epithets: the "acerbic" Acheson, the "brooding" Kennan, the "hypocondriac" Lovett, and so forth. This does less than justice to men whose personalities were - and are - hardly one-dimensional.

Still, historians have never found it easy to write about "establishments". The traditional sources upon which they depend - archives, memoirs, contemporary published materials - do little more than suggest the informal lines of influence that flow from close personal friendships or from intimate professional collaboration; conversations occurring in corridors or over the telephone, or at cocktail parties, corporate board meetings, even college reunions, can at times shape events more decisively than whole stacks of the official memoranda that find their way into the archives. And yet, barring an administration of compulsive diary-keepers, or such recent White House innovations as voice-activated taping systems and erasure-proof computer banks, records are rarely made of such encounters; if they are remembered at all, it is apt to be only imperfectly.

The result has been that historians have usually either confined themselves to the documents, thereby portraying history (misleadingly) as made chiefly by those who wrote things down; or they have attempted to deduce the behaviour of those who did not from what is known of their psychological make-up, or their various fraternal or corporate affiliations. The first approach has worked well enough for administrations like Franklin Roosevelt's, where quarrelling Cabinet members did indeed defend themselves against each other by meticulously (and maliciously) keeping

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diaries; but such situations are rare. The second approach too easily leads itself to determinism: one concludes that, because an individual had a difficult mother, or belonged to the Council on Foreign Relations, or – most sinister of all – had been initiated into Skulls and Bones, a secret society at Yale, his behaviour can be reliably reconstructed even in situations for which documentary evidence is lacking.

Isaacson and Thomas do not wholly free themselves from fraternal determinism: Skull and Bones, they are convinced, explains a good deal. But their book avoids most of the other pitfalls of "establishment" studies: it treats its protagonists as discrete individuals; it makes good use of what the archival evidence does tell us; it is for the most part sensitive to historical context; and the authors have used interviews effectively to illuminate those elusive aspects of personality – and relationships between personalities – that too often get lost when history is written solely on the basis of the paper it leaves behind.

The authors finished writing this book before the current "frangate" crisis broke, but their book suggests – if only by inversion – something about the deficiencies of leadership that led to that disaster. It was characteristic of this earlier generation of statesmen, Isaacson and Thomas remind us, that while they relished power, they did not crave it "merely to possess it". They took for granted a standard of integrity that owed allegiance more to the national interest than to their own; they possessed a conception of what that national interest was that transcended considerations of personal gain, career advancement, or partisan advantage. It is this ability to distinguish between self and country, the authors imply, that the wise men's successors have somehow lost: their book is a nostalgic but clear call for a return – both by our leaders and by the scholars who write about them – to an appreciation of ancient virtues.

Hugh Thomas's *Armed Truce* also celebrates particularity, but in a different way: his

book is an elaborate account of the state of the world at the moment the Cold War began. Lord Thomas will be familiar to students of international relations from his earlier books – none of them brief – on the Spanish Civil War, the Cuban Revolution, and, in 1979, *The Unfinished History of the World*. Large projects seem not to intimidate him, and that is just as well, for the present volume devotes over five hundred pages of text to the first seven months of the post-war epoch; several successor volumes, he assures us, are yet to come.

They should be worth waiting for, because there is much to commend in *Armed Truce*. No book now in print captures more faithfully, or with greater detail, the way things looked at the end of the war. There is here no projection of the present back on to the past; Thomas has succeeded admirably in divorcing himself, as few other historians of the subject have, from the tyranny of knowing what came next. His is, moreover, a truly international view of Cold War origins: he does not focus narrowly on the Americans and Russians, or even the Americans, the Russians, and the British, but gives proportionate attention as well to what was happening in Europe, the Near East, East Asia, and, not least, the scientific laboratories on both sides of the Iron Curtain in which the new technology of nuclear war was under development.

Like the authors of *The Wise Men*, Thomas subscribes wholeheartedly to the old-fashioned idea that great men make history – "there were no women of the slightest political consequence at that time", he observes, thereby unfashionably ignoring Mrs Roosevelt – and he has also taken care to imbue what could have been a dry and tedious account of early post-war diplomacy with the colour, dash and flair of distinctive personalities.

Thomas begins his account – as many participants have begun their retrospective memories of these events – with Stalin's ominously suspicious "election" speech of February 1946: much as Kennan had done in his famous "long telegram" to Washington that same month, Thomas suggests that

the combination of the extreme subtlety of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy with the brute force of Communist methods made for policies which needed the appearance at least of conflict; and, if possible, conflict blame for which could be attributed to the capitalist or imperialist enemies.

Thomas's hundred-page account of what the Soviet Union was like in 1946 is particularly good; it will serve as a useful corrective to those who would still seek to picture that country, as it was at that time and under the leader it then had, as in any way a "normal" actor in the international state system.

The United States comes across, somewhat less convincingly, as a vigorous but naive giant, whose leaders had only begun to grasp the fact that economics and politics might relate to one another, or that there could be genuine evil in the world. But Thomas is probably correct when he argues that the American people wished nothing more than to return to the happy combination of consumerism and isolationism from which a decade and a half of war and depression had wrenched them; they regarded war "as a brief if bitter interruption of peace, prosperity and liberty"; they "continued to think in terms of solutions". Nor did anyone outside the Western Hemisphere see the United States as much of a threat: the concept of "American imperialism", Thomas points out, had been scarcely known in Europe prior to 1939: "like syphilis, tobacco and the potato, it is a product of Latin America".

British imperialism was, of course, a more familiar presence, but Thomas does not see British imperialism as having been any better equipped thereby to deal with the post-war Soviet challenge: ideology, he notes, was not much taught in English public schools. His view here reflects recent research – based largely on documents now available at the Public Record Office – that his revealed puzzle-moment and indecision in London with regard to the Russians at least as great as those which prevailed across the Atlantic. It is remarkable that the British diplomatic establishment, with its vastly greater experience in dealing with unpleasant foreigners, lacked the American State Department's foresight in providing itself with trained Russian specialists comparable to Kennan and Boblen, or with the means of pro-

tecting itself against the foresight Soviet agents showed in setting out to recruit, from its own ranks, certain of its more colourful "generalists".

The merit of *Armed Truce* lies not so much in the originality of its research – Thomas depends heavily on existing published materials – or even in the novelty of its argument, which, in its forthright assignment of responsibility for the Cold War to the Russians end in the emphasis it places on the ideological roots of their behaviour, parallels arguments "orthodox" historians of Cold War origins were putting forward three decades ago. What is impressive about this book – and *The Wise Men* as well – is the way in which overwhelming but absorbing detail tends to bring us back, historiographically, pretty much to where we started. It says something about the tenuous nature of the interpretations and counter-interpretations historians impose upon the past when a competent scholar can assimilate so much of what has been published about the Cold War in so many countries during the past thirty years and still come out, on balance and with considerable persuasiveness, blaming the Russians for it. Perhaps he is on to something.

The other books under review here can be more briefly dealt with. Bradley Smith's *The War's Long Shadow* takes on much the same task as *Armed Truce*, but with reference to a broader period and at about a third of the length. The book is a succinct account of the Second World War's legacy for four nations – China, Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union – during the five years that followed its conclusion. Like Thomas, Smith has written extensively on related topics, among them the Nuremberg war crimes trials and the American Office of Strategic Services; his concern here, though, is less to assign responsibility for the Cold War than to explain how the Second World War led to it.

Synthesizing familiar material while retaining the reader's interest is no easy thing to do, but Smith has managed it admirably. This brief book is filled with fresh insights: that in 1939 less than 3 per cent of Americans paid income taxes; that six other nations had armies larger than that of the United States in 1947 (prior to the war the American army had ranked nineteenth in size, just ahead of Bulgaria's); that, for all the casualties both nations suffered, the war had little lasting impact on the birth-rate or population profile of China, but a profound one on those of the Soviet Union.

Smith attributes responsibility for the Cold War not so much to the actions of one side or another as to the shattering impact of the Second World War itself: that event changed the entire nature of international relations by removing Germany and Japan altogether as independent actors, by severely weakening Britain, Western Europe, and especially China, by leaving Russia exhausted, suspicious, but in a greater position to expand its influence than ever before in its history, and by leaving the task of counter-balancing that expansionism to an ambitious and very much strengthened, but equally ill-informed and inexperienced, United States. In the wake of so cosmic a shift, Smith argues – and here he differs from Thomas – culprits are hard to find.

Robin Edmonds is a retired British diplomat whose career has spanned almost the entire Cold War. In *Setting the Mould*, he has returned to the documents – this time as a historian – to chronicle the immediate post-war half-decade that so decisively determined the character of subsequent Anglo-American relations. He has done so very much in the spirit of the other books under review here: "It does not diminish the historical stature of those who resolved these issues by their decisions", he writes, "to recognize... that these were years not only of confrontation but of confusion. The confrontation and the confusion were equally memorable".

What Edmonds recounts is, by now, a familiar story: how the Americans and the British took each other too much for granted at the end of the war, and so found themselves sharply at odds over such issues as economic reconstruction and the atomic bomb; how innovative statecraft on both sides – involving remarkable extensions of trust as well as discreet indulgences in conspiracy – overcame these difficulties; how the result was to make possible institutions and practices that have

brought Europe almost a half-century of relative order and prosperity; but how Great Britain, having invited the Americans in with such an outcome very much in mind, failed – through its own overlong attachment to the "special relationship" with Washington – fully to benefit from that achievement.

Would the United States have been better served by a Britain more closely linked to Europe, less content to follow the American lead? Edmonds raises – but does not answer – that question here. What his careful and well-researched account does show, though, is that many Americans in official positions during the late 1940s would have welcomed the alternative: the idea of a European "third force", of which Britain would have been a vital part, had surprising support in Washington at the time. It was the British themselves, Edmonds reminds us – partly out of a short-sighted nostalgia for their own empire, partly out of an equally myopic expectation that they could always "manage", like clever "Greeks", the one the American "Romans" were constructing – who stepped back from genuine independence, thereby "setting a mould" that still, to this day, constrains.

Thomas T. Hammond, a professor of Russian history at the University of Virginia, has for long and with good reason questioned efforts to explain the coming of the Cold War without reference to the early post-war behaviour of the Soviet Union. The collection of essays he has edited, *Witnesses to the Origins of the Cold War*, seeks to reconstruct "what actually happened" through the direct testimony of Americans who were on the scene in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in either a military or a diplomatic capacity, at the end of the Second World War.

The resulting volume – which includes contributions by Kennan, William H. McNeill, Cyril E. Black and Michael B. Petrovich, among others – confirms what psychologists have long suggested about the critical importance of first impressions. The simple experience of having to deal with Soviet official representatives on a day-to-day basis came as an unpleasant surprise to most American soldiers and diplomats entrusted with such responsibilities; the fact that many of these "first contacts" took place in Eastern Europe at the time the Russians were consolidating their control there made the resulting impressions that much worse. It was all too easy for Americans to derive, from such difficult individual encounters, conclusions about how the Soviet State as a whole could be expected to behave in the post-war era.

Should the Russians have been more respectful of Western sensibilities? Clearly this would have been to their advantage, given the fact that neither the United States nor Great Britain was prepared ultimately to contest Soviet control in Eastern Europe. The brutality with which the Red Army imposed its presence there, together with the alien distrust Soviet occupation authorities exhibited towards their Western counterparts, gained the Russians little or nothing: in terms of goodwill – which is to say expectations for the future – it lost them a lot, and it is helpful to be reminded of this through the testimony of these personal witnesses.

Bradley Smith notes at the end of his book that the Second World War and the events that immediately followed are as remote from us chronologically as the turn of the century was for those who fought in that conflict. And yet historians of the 1940s have found it curiously difficult to achieve that necessary distancing of subject from current preoccupations that good historical writing usually requires. One reason for this, Smith suggests, is that the world of the 1940s is still so much with us: compare how much the world changed between 1900 and 1945; as against how little – at least as far as relations between the great powers are concerned – since then. It may be too much to expect balanced, dispassionate history under these circumstances, especially since we still have no access at all to either Soviet or Chinese archival sources on Cold War origins. But we can at least make the effort to prevent passions of the present from distorting our vision of events at the time they were happening. We can remind ourselves, upon occasion, that the really dangerous "one direction" only these five books help to do that.

## Pacific overtures

Ben Pimlott

CAROLINE MOOREHEAD  
*Troublesome People: Enemies of war 1916-1986*  
344pp. Hamish Hamilton. £14.95.  
0241 42105 1

It is not chance that the century in which humanity has pushed the potential for self-destruction to the limit should also be the one to give birth to the political religion of pacifism. In theory, pacifism is as much about bows and arrows as about star wars. In practice, what provides its modern impetus is the fear of Armageddon. Today, most people who wonder how much longer a world that annually spends a thousand billion pounds on weapons can stagger on, probably have a sneaking regard for those who simply and completely reject the devil and all his works.

Pacifists are extremists: the fundamentalists of the anti-war movement. Outside this exclusive group are people opposed to war but who limit the extent of their objection to it. First, there are those who object to particular practices connected with war (such as conscription), or to some wars but not others (the war in Vietnam, but not the wars against Germany), or to certain categories of explosive device. Beyond this category of partial objectors lie a range of points of view usefully labelled by A. J. P. Taylor as "pacifist", which emphasize peace, arms reduction, anti-militarism, internationalism.

Caroline Moorehead's *Troublesome People: Enemies of war 1916-1986* is concerned with people of all persuasions who have been prepared to make a self-sacrificing stand against war. It is in two parts: the first traces British pacifism and pacifism up to 1945, with brief digressions on the United States; the second, post-Hiroshima, considers the development of anti-nuclear campaigns on a world stage. The author's method is to provide a factual outline,

and then to fill it out with biographical sketches and a few interviews. In the second part, she also describes her own feelings and impressions during a visit three years ago to the atom-bomb sites in Japan.

Pacifism as a personal belief (the refusal to bear arms) may be as old as Christianity, as Moorehead suggests, or even older. But as a cause of political protest in Britain it was not significant until the introduction of conscription in 1916, and it is here that the account in this book begins. Conscription not only brought into being the political phenomenon of conscientious objection, it also created the largely administrative problem of what to do about it. During the First World War, war resistance was never much of an embarrassment to the government. Nevertheless, the expedient of compulsion to work effectively, it needed to be applied fairly, universally and – at the same time – to convey to those subjected to it a sense that their co-operation was a duty.

Ought conscientious objectors to be punished as traitors, or regarded as honourable men whose treatment should be designed merely to discourage others from following the same path? Generally (especially at first), the government preferred punishment, yet sought to avoid the damage to morale which might have occurred if the protesters had been allowed to appear as martyrs. Those who accepted alternative, non-combatant war work presented little problem. It was the "absolutists", those who refused to do anything that might aid the war effort, who caused the headache.

There were some *causes célèbres* – which have aroused greater interest in retrospect, perhaps, than they did at the time. In the intense world of Bloomsbury, war resistance enjoyed a vogue, particularly among people who would not have been much good at fighting anyway. But the majority of war objectors were not highly educated, famous or articulate. Of a sample of 3,701 appearing before Tribunals, according to the author, 2,870 never

got beyond elementary school. Naturally, it was the poorest and the least educated who received the roughest treatment. There are many stories of cruelty in the annals of the movement, and Moorehead relates some of them. Much of it was no different from the routine sadism meted out by guards to their defenceless prisoners in every country and culture throughout history. But there was also a particular element of hostility towards people considered self-indulgent and unpatriotic. When Ramsay MacDonald protested about the conditions at an objectors' centre at Dyce, near Aberdeen, where 250 men had been sent to hack lumps of granite, MPs howled him down. "We can ill afford in this country", said one, "to coddle and canoodle these people."

MacDonald painted a harrowing picture of roads at Dyce that were "simply huge, swaying masses of mud..." but there was mud in Flanders, too, and there it was mixed with rats and corpses. In the context of the horrific scale of military casualties during the First World War, the treatment of a small number of conscientious objectors could never seem a very major stain on the national character. Yet the course of those who chose to be social outcasts is undeniable.

While the war was on, public opinion was little affected by the protesters. After the war, things changed. Before 1914, pacifism had barely existed; during the war, it was a small, beleaguered faith; with the coming of peace, the pent-up emotions of the bloodiest conflict in history turned it into a fashion. In Britain, the 1920s were its heyday. London bohemianism was taken over by it, linked to the avant-garde socialist and revolutionary doctrines that the war had given currency. Pacifism now was associated with a package of literary and intellectual attributes frequently lampooned in the pages of *Punch*. Thus the 1917 Club (named after the February, not the October, Revolution) was patronized, according to Douglas Goldring (quoted by the author), by "Hindus, Parsees, Puritans, free lovers, Quakers, teeto-

tallers, heavy drinkers, Morris dancers and hey-hin for Bradley and Bedales", members of the London School of Economics, Trade Union officials, journalists, poets, actors and actresses, Communists, theosophists, and sexologists talking about masturbation.

This was the decade in which pacifists acquired the image later associated with Ben-the-Bomb marches and Liberal Assemblies – sandalled, pallid and bearded. It was also the decade of movements, including Kibbo Kift, founded by John Hargreave, a rebel scout-master and back-to-nature mystic. Kibbo Kift's adherents pursued world peace by living the rugged outdoor life, speaking a private language (half Anglo-Saxon, half Red-Indian), and holding an annual "althing". H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley served on the Advisory Committee. (The modern Woodcraft Folk are an offshoot.)

By the mid-1920s, pacifism or near-pacifism had become *de rigueur* on the British left (unilateralism was to have a similar hold on socialist opinion six decades later). In the early 1930s, the tone of books against war altered: hard-edged myth-busting was replaced by precisely mush. "Other things changed as well. 'Despite Hitler and Mussolini', writes Moorehead, somewhat in the manner of the joke about Mrs Abraham Lincoln's interrupted evening, "1933 was a good year for the peace-makers..." They were certainly vocal and confident. In Britain, it was beginning to seem hopelessly fuddy-duddy not to place yourself among them. 1933 was probably the peak: though the Labour Party passed another explicitly pacifist resolution in October, its attitude began to alter thereafter. Nevertheless, for the National Government as well as for Labour, the moral influence of pacifism continued to affect diplomatic assumptions.

Overt pacifism was finally deleted from the official policy of the Labour Party in 1935. But it was Franco, not Hitler or Mussolini, who dealt the pre-Second World War movement its

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John Co. 136



fatal blow. Before the Spanish conflict, to be on the left was virtually synonymous with being a pacifist of sorts. War, it was believed (in accordance with the writings of E. D. Morel and H. N. Brailsford, as well as of the Marxists) was the product of capitalism: abolish capitalism and you would abolish war. Meanwhile, it was inappropriate to take sides. Franco's rebellion in Spain, however, made every-body take sides. In 1937, a poll organized by the *Left Review* revealed 128 leading writers declaring for the Republic and five for Franco. Only sixteen were neutral and of these only one, Vera Brittain, took an uncompromisingly pacifist stand.

"The British Left had given up their pacifism", says Moorehead, "but they had done so slowly." Actually they did it extremely fast. Within months of Franco's attack, left-wing opinion was united in its demand for British arms to be sent to Spain; and by 1937 the Labour Party was officially calling for a military-backed stand against the dictators. Labour offered token resistance to conscription early in 1939, more for old times' sake than out of conviction. Then it gave the government its wholehearted co-operation, and helped to coax a still-hesitant Prime Minister into a declaration of war.

Second World War conscientious objection was a hangover from the First. Better Nazi than dead was a tricky argument to sustain once the true nature of Hitler's régime had been revealed. Popular ideologies of peace might have perished altogether, if not in the ashes of Berlin, then in the courtroom at Nuremberg, had it not been for the atomic bomb. Oddly enough, it was a long time – a decade even – before the significance of Hiroshima for future wars and human history began to sink in.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was founded in 1958. The heritage from the No More War Movement, the No Conscription

Fellowship, the Union of Democratic Control, and the non-pacifist Peace Pledge Union was direct. Soon, the mass mischro (to later from) Aldermaston became an established Easter rite. For many at the time, it was also a cheerful liberal bourgeois romp. A 1959 poll showed that 41 per cent of marchers were under twenty-one, and only 4 per cent believed themselves to be working-class.

By the time of the Labour victory in the election of October 1964 that odd little badge, briefly an essential ornament on every rebellious sixth-former's lapel, had vanished into a



George Lansbury planting an inaugural tree at Kingsley Hall, the East End community centre started by the pacifist Lester sisters (behind Lansbury on the right). The reproduction is taken from the book reviewed above.

## Doing it for the men

Hilary Spurling

BEATRICE CAMPBELL  
The Iron Ladies: Why do women vote Tory?  
224pp. Virago. Paperback, £4.95.  
018686892

The playwright who, in Max Beerbohm's words, sold his birthright for a pot of message got the worst of that transaction. So do most imaginative writers who stray too far or stay too long in the gap between the way things are, and the way they ought to be. It is tricky territory for Beatrice Campbell, whose passion, instinctive commitment as a reporter to the first of these two states is perpetually undermined and trivialized, in this new book, by her no less powerful political adherence to the second.

The problem scarcely arose in *Wigan Pier* (1928), a brilliant first piece of reportage which dealt with poverty and the working class: how things are in that book was so clearly the way they should not be that readers might be safely trusted to draw their own conclusions. Her present subject is more recalcitrant. The iron ladies interviewed here are not, ideologically speaking, dissatisfied with their lot. Acceptance of things as they are is one of the definitions of conservatism: an essentially pessimistic philosophy, mistrustful of change, profoundly fatalistic. On page after page, Campbell's interviewees reiterate the same formula: hang on, make do, put up with it, don't rock the boat. Rocking the boat – with its attendant images of icy water, uncontrollable crashing waves, the ultimate possibility of drowning – is a deep-seated horror. It is not simply that these Tories do not believe in fundamental change, they fear it. It follows that conservatism means among other things, for both sexes, not only accepting but endorsing the subjugation of women.

Women are crucial to the Tory Party as they never have been to Labour. They have served it behind the scenes from the days of the Primrose League, founded, like the Women's Liberal Federation, to "be to the party what Mrs Gladstone was to her husband". Women

provide a bottomless pool of harmless drudges, unpaid secretaries, canvassers and whippers-in, fund-raisers above all at an unending round of bring-and-buys, coffee mornings, jumble sales, fêtes and flower shows. Their activities are by tradition strictly apolitical: "The ladies were working very hard for the cause without knowing what the cause was", explained one understandably anonymous male politician, "and being prepared to adjust the cause year by year or election by election as circumstances seemed to demand."

Ladies like these – the word itself is a traditional Tory put-down – plug on with watering the grass roots, apparently contented, self-contained and self-respecting like church-workers, seldom raising their heads or airing their views in Campbell's book. The more articulate sisters who spoke to her tend to divide into two factions. On the one hand are what she calls the fugitives, or wolves in sheep's clothing – "corseled, coiffed and ready to kill" – fortified behind their barricades by nostalgia, and by stirring dreams of retribution against a hostile, invariably male world of rapists, muggers, thugs, blacks, foreigners and products of the comprehensive school ("The beasts, they break in and batter women to death!") They never, according to the accounts rendered here, consider channeling their pent-up anger and resentment into dismantling the system they find so oppressive. Nor do their opposite numbers, forceful, capable and commanding women – chief among them Margaret Thatcher – who for the most part cordially approve the Thatcherite view of women's home-makers and housekeepers, effective primarily within the family. Their instinctive response is not to join forces with their own restricted and dimly regarded sex, but to desert it: "I despised my own mother because I saw her as a slave and I won't have that attitude to me", was one characteristically responsive: "I don't want to be one of them."

A scheme for becoming honorary men can, of course, easily backfire. This book is full of cautionary tales of women who defied unspoken taboos and came to grief, by refusing to leave the table with the arrival of the port, or, more mysteriously, by trying to dress like men

bottom drawer. After 1964, and the broken election promise to abandon our "independent" deterrent, nuclear protest went dormant for sixteen years. Vietnam was a real war, and it absorbed all the energies of the left. As an organization, CND did not quite die, though it gave up demonstrations. The recrudescence coincided with Reagan, Thatcher, the breakdown of *détente*, concern over the cost of a new generation of nuclear weapons, ecological worries about fast-breeder reactors, an alarming near-miss nuclear alert – all helped along, in the Labour Party (as in 1960), by an unre-

lated factional split.

Yet can these factors be said to have caused the resurgence? The 1980s manifestation is falling back now, and short of divine intervention at the ballot box, we may expect the soft-nuclear movement to disappear from view once again. The scale and political impact of the new movement at its peak, however, suggest that the message of CND's first phase may have had a wider influence than was previously imagined. At its strongest (about 1983), CND was capable of gathering bigger crowds than had been seen since 1945. Nor, this time, was Britain on its own. In the autumn of 1981, ten major European cities witnessed anti-nuclear demonstrations of 100,000 or more.

Such figures would have gladdened the hearts of the No Conscription Fellowship in the First World War. So would the passive resistance of the Committee of 100 and, recently, the Greenham Common women. Yet, as Bertrand Russell observed, even if nuclear disarmament was achieved, the problem it was intended to meet would not be solved. "The thing you have to ban is war." With the real prospect of arms limitation, 1987 is a more hopeful year than most; is the dream of abolishing war, which the early pacifists held dear, any closer to fulfillment? Few people would claim that it was. Yet, as Caroline Moorehead reminds us, active rejection of war is now a stronger force in the world than it has ever been.

*Troublesome People* is clearly written and sincere, but says little that is not obtainable in other standard works, such as Martin Ceadel's *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945*, upon which it is heavily dependent. Other key texts, like A. J. P. Taylor's *The Troubled Makers*, appear to have been ignored. Nevertheless, the accessible style of the book, and its wide range, make it a serviceable introduction to a tradition which is one of the main tributaries of contemporary political thought.

in lace-up shoes and dark suits ("One woman wore Hush Puppies for an interview for an urban seat! And another wore a black suit – no way!") Again and again we come up against the Catch-22 of Tory feminism: if women, with all their built-in disadvantages, can compete only on men's terms with men, they must inevitably remain at a disadvantage. All men are equal but some are more equal than others. It is not enough for a prospective female parliamentary candidate to make sure that, like a man, she turns up for her interview driving a car with this year's registration. She needs a mink coat too: "Marriage is always an issue but I can say in effect, what do I want a husband for while I'm swinging the mink over my shoulders." Catch-22 says that, even though she may be permitted in the circumstances to dispense with a husband, on this showing she certainly still needs a wife: someone to do the chores, mind the phone, bear and rear the children.

Nor is there any question of things improving when she reaches the House of Commons. Women MPs get there after a long course of more or less disagreeable, often deliberate, sometimes downright hostile blocking, only to find that none of this can on any account be mentioned, especially not to female colleagues. "I don't really know why we don't talk about the pain", said one (again understandably anonymous):

may be in the Conservative Party if it was expressed it would be regarded as much too close to lesbianism, to an admission that you were a great feminist protagonist... It's perfectly okay for the man to be gay, we've got loads of them... Nobody talks about it but we all recognize it. But... women have got to be careful for marriage, for all the things which are respected in this society, for men. Absolutely.

These assumptions may be crudely put, but they are not, on the evidence collected here, at all unfair. They are tacitly borne out by many of Campbell's more delicate or diffident, or perhaps simply less articulate informants. They lie behind the party's view of women, shared by both sexes, as a docile, diligent, mindless workforce. "I used to work for the Tories in a very uncommitted way. It was like going to church," said one subsequent convert, explaining the practical workings of a system

that comes very close to the suppression of thought itself: "It never occurred to me to think about the issues. It was like a spirit, like your family: you didn't look too closely at them."

In a world where feminism is equated with lesbianism, and thinking is commonly proscribed, no wonder it has been left to a communist observer in attempt "to generate a capitalist-feminism which would challenge the anti-capitalist hegemony among British feminist politics". Looking too closely is Campbell's speciality. Her problem is that so much of what she sees confounds her expectations: "Conversations with Conservative women show that they are more diverse and pluralistic than we might assume." Beatrice Campbell, always at her best recording diversity and plurality, is here too often perplexed and distracted by inevitably superficial, often tendentious political or psychological explanations, backed up by large chunks of popular history in the early stages.

*The Iron Ladies* is a kind of contemporary, political *Alice in Wonderland*, except that the objective, observant narrator metamorphoses from time to time into Alice herself – a rational, logical, self-confident and indignant creature whose efforts to set wonderland to rights generally end in confusion and bewilderment. This is a fascinating book, but it might have been more so if the author had not been perpetually hampered in her investigations by the difficulty of reconciling a set of comparatively banal theoretical expectations with the highly peculiar, unexpected and absorbing actuality she found in practice whenever she looked too closely.

*Political Power in the Postindustrial City: An Introduction to urban politics* by Marcus D. Pohlmann (421pp. Associated Faculty Press, £23.00/46.95/9.7) includes a chapter on urban colonialism, one entitled "The Fiscal Crisis" and analysis of the current political situation in two cities – New York and Cleveland. In the case of New York, Pohlmann demonstrates how, in 1975, a corporate elite successfully balanced the budget, at the expense of the political power of the general public.

## Can don't care be made to care?

Ian Jack

DORIS LESSING  
The Wind Blows Away Our Words: And other documents relating to the Afghan resistance  
172pp. Picador. Paperback, £2.95.  
0330300768  
PREFACE BY HODSON  
Under A Sickle Moon: A journey through Afghanistan  
236pp. Century Hutchinson, £12.95.  
0001652006

Out of a brief visit to Pakistan and a long-standing commitment to the cause of the Afghan rebels and refugees, Doris Lessing has attempted to fashion a book which will penetrate what she calls the "wall of indifference" which shuts out the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from the Western conscience. She takes her title from something a commander of the *mujahedin*, the Afghan resistance, tells her: "We cry to you for help, but the wind blows away our words."

The commander's imagery slightly misleads. In fact, large amounts of Western aid are dispatched to the refugee camps and the *mujahedin*; reports in the American press suggest that arms for Afghanistan cost Washington about \$250 million a year. It is probably true, on the other hand, that the Afghan war does not attract the international attention it deserves – and needs, if the protracted negotiations for a political settlement are ever to reach a solution.

How can we be made to care? Lessing has all the skills of a considerable novelist at her command, but in this book rarely chooses to use them. During her short tour of the refugee camps and guerrilla headquarters she meets many people who have suffered, but they are only fleetingly evoked. The most memorable character, in some ways the most tormented sufferer, remains the author herself. In the prologue she tells the story of Cassandra, and although she never speaks of herself directly in the same role, the tone of her account suggests a woman particularly burdened with a sense of oncoming tragedy, walling and tearing her hair at the heedlessness of others.

## Nice touches from a nasty war

Michael Massing

RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI  
Another Day of Life  
Translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand  
136pp. Picador, £3.95.  
0330298445

Ryszard Kapuściński may hold the world record for witnessing revolutions: at the last count, he had been present at twenty-seven of them. He may also be the only journalist in Eastern Europe to enjoy a following in the West. First published in Polish, when they subsequently appeared in English translation his books *The Emperor* (about the fall of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia) and *Shah of Shahs* (about the overthrow of Reza Pahlavi in Iran) were greeted with considerable acclaim.

*Another Day of Life* is about not the toppling of a monarch but the collapse of a city. The year is 1975; and Portugal is about to grant independence to Angola after almost 400 years of colonial rule. The Angolans, however, are divided into three rival factions, and each hopes to control the capital, Luanda, by Independence Day. The city's inhabitants anticipate a bloodbath, and everyone who can is trying to leave. At the time, Kapuściński was a correspondent for the official Polish news agency. When asked by his editor if he was interested in travelling to Angola, his reaction, as he facetiously puts it, was "I always answer yes to such situations." He would remain for three months.

*Another Day of Life*, first published in Poland in 1976, contains Kapuściński's story of that time. The book still has a certain topicality for the war in Angola drags on, an internal conflict with important international impli-

Of course, there is a lot to wail about. The Afghan war has lasted seven years (which is not, as Lessing says, "three years longer than the Second World War"). About a fifth of the population has fled the country, creating perhaps the largest refugee population in the world, and another 500,000 Afghans have been killed or wounded. These statistics come from reputable international fact-finders such as the Helsinki Watch committee and a report by the United Nations special *rapporteur*, Felix Ermacora. They do not come from Lessing's book. She never troubles to source her own higher estimates. "I have not mentioned the half million to a million (I have just heard, two million) refugees in Iran", she writes at one point, as though some mysterious divinity, too great to be named, was keeping her abreast of the situation with daily reports.

She is a most credulous witness – both a surprise and an irritant in a writer who, over several decades, has followed the shifting currents of global politics. Afghans tell her stories, and because Lessing likes Afghans and sympathizes with them, the stories become facts. She tells us that Afghans have brought down Soviet helicopters with hand-grenades attached to kites (spare a thought for the complex mechanics of such a weapon), while "it goes without saying" that every servant is a police agent at her hotel in Peshawar, the frontier town (a place "full of intrigue, mysterious happenings, spies").

Western journalism, in her view, has hindered rather than helped the Afghan cause. A BBC documentary team is berated for cowardice in the face of Soviet bombs, though no evidence is offered for the charge. "A good part of the film was obviously shot by the *mujahedin*, probably the battle sequences." (My italics.) She accuses one of the *Guardian*'s most experienced reporters of "swallowing everything the Russians told him", again without evidence and getting his name wrong in the process. In fact it is Lessing who is the great swallower and regurgitator, and it comes as no surprise when she complains that her journalism on Afghanistan has been returned by every newspaper, British and American, to which it has been sent. No correspondent with her cavalier approach to information could hope to

survive the scrutiny of a half-awake foreign editor. For example, she writes of the continuing flow of refugees that "many thousands, hundreds of thousands, are dying when they arrive". If this sentence means what it seems to mean – and the routine questions of why, when, where and how are never addressed – then the world's press camped in Pakistan have missed a story of shattering implications. Have hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees died of hunger and disease, or not? Where are the pictures, the exposed rib-cages, the flies settling on the suppurating eyes of the young?

Lessing puts the question in a different way. "Why do we care about Africa? Why are the 200,000 or a million [starving] Africans so much more deserving of headlines than the equivalent number of Afghans?" An obvious answer is that the hardship of the Afghans is less dramatic and cannot provide pictures which evoke such strong reactions of horror and pity as those from Sudan and Ethiopia; and that the West (and here Lessing is not immune) has chosen to see the Afghans as gallant warriors rather than tragic victims of war, which is also how they often choose to see themselves. Lessing has a different answer. The West, she says, has somehow been "sensitized" to the problems of Africa, while the political sympathies of the Western media have led to a kind of cover-up in Afghanistan. According to her, the United States' policy in Nicaragua is "relentlessly criticised at the top of everybody's voice, vituperously [sic], endlessly", while Soviet policy in Afghanistan has been "excused, softened".

This is what Lessing in the final chapter of *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* calls "the strange case of the western conscience". A more accurate phrase would be "the old case of the selective Leftist conscience", because the problem Lessing describes is confined to a dwindling minority of political Russophiles, of whom Lessing was once one, who cannot easily surrender their idea that the Soviet Union has a higher morality than the nations of the West. Her book is really the pamphlet of an apostate, a paper dart aimed at those who have not yet left the fold.

Peregrine Hodson has no such overtly political intent in *Under A Sickle Moon*. He is forty

Kapuściński is excellent at spotting ironies. Food supplies are dwindling, but a film projectionist has discovered a copy of *Emmanuelle* and is screening it repeatedly in an open-air theatre. On a visit to the front, Kapuściński listens as MPLA sentries argue heatedly with their prisoners over the previous day's football results; a commander named Ju-Ju seeks to elicit information from prisoners not by torturing them but by "evoking feelings of shame and guilt".

Nice touches all. After a while, though, one becomes tired of these and similar observations. Irony presents a special hazard for foreign correspondents. Used sparingly, it provides an effective device for describing the exotic and unfamiliar – a sort of flash bulb for lighting up distant landscapes; used to excess, it becomes distracting, a substitute for real insight. *Another Day of Life* is like an album of snapshots, providing lots of detail but little sense of the broader picture. What are these armies fighting for? Why, after years of battling the Portuguese, do they start slaughtering one another? This slim volume offers few clues, devoid as it is of history, ideology, even of politics.

Instead, all is chaos. Luanda, we learn, is a "cosmic mess". "This war", a commander tells us, "is a real mess." At one point, Kapuściński devotes two pages to analysing the word *confusão*, Portuguese for "confusion", the term in Angola has come to mean a "state of absolute disorientation". In a land filled with rumour and dread, *confusão* is the only constant. This is the real theme of the book: war is *confusão*. Perhaps so, but we look to accounts like this to make some sense of things. Unfortunately, Kapuściński rarely rises above the level of anecdote.

There are occasional insights. One involves the matter of who intervened first in Angola.

years younger than Lessing, though on the evidence of his book's opening pages he might easily be forty years older, a throwback to the days of the Khyber Rifles and the Great Game. Filling in some time between a job at the Bar and another in a merchant bank, he decides to smuggle himself into Afghanistan with a group of *mujahedin*. Kimball O'Hara himself would surely bless an enterprise in which a young Englishman called Peregrine tucks himself up in native dress and takes the name Abdul Faz, Abdul the Falcon. Watching some *mujahedin* at their Islamic devotions, he is reminded of "house prayers at school". Wondering how to dispose of a foul tobacco mixture, taken orally, he remembers a story about cherry-stones on an Oxford high table and unwisely swallows it. But these are early days, before the Pakistan border has been crossed. As his journey inside Afghanistan progresses, Hodson emerges as a more modern, canny figure. He is sometimes scared and bad-tempered. He relieves fatigue and boredom by listening to Bach and Frankie Gools to Hollywood on his Walkman. After several weeks on foot and horseback, sometimes exposed to Soviet bombs, he writes in his diary of "the withering of a romantic dream". He had "glimpsed the life of a people" but he was "very little closer to knowing what it was to be one of them".

He made the effort none the less, and the result is an intimate, sympathetic account of individual lives caught up in a ruinous war. The *mujahedin*, he notices, often show little respect for the peasant families who feed and water them. They are also hopelessly divided; the closest Hodson comes to being shot is when his group is ambushed by a rival gang. And while American money and arms may help the rebels to prosecute their war against the *kafirs*, the unbelievers of the Soviet Union, they still bracket Washington with Moscow as a centre of pagan materialism.

This is a fine book, in some places as taut and vivid as those exciting hunted-versus-the-hunter passages of John Buchan or Geoffrey Household, and always underpinned by a refreshing sense of the specific. The generalized wailing of Cassandra never intrudes, and the wall of our indifference is pierced by the sharp details of other people's loss and blight.

Since 1975, this has been much disputed. Was it the Cubans, sent to head off a South African invasion? Or was it the South Africans, come to counter a burgeoning Soviet-Cuban presence? In *Another Day of Life* the sequence is clear. Kapuściński tells us that he was at the front with government troops when the MPLA first learnt from a captured soldier that a column of South Africans had entered the country and was heading for Luanda. This was startling news, and Kapuściński raced back to the capital to tell the world. The South Africans steadily advanced, and their arrival in Luanda seemed inevitable. One night, however, acting on a tip, he drove out to the airport. There he watched as four Cuban planes touched down. This was the start of what would become a massive airlift. Unfortunately, Kapuściński spent little time thinking about its implications. Instead, he returned to the hotel and the chaos that prevailed there.

The contrast between sharp description and shallow analysis that marks this book is nowhere clearer than when Kapuściński, preparing to leave Angola, goes to the villa of President Agostinho Neto to say goodbye. The president is a renowned poet, and as his country collapses around him, he laments that he has had no time to write poetry. It's a poignant moment, and one expects to learn more. Instead we are told,

I knew that things were going badly. I wanted to learn the details from him, but at the same time I didn't feel up to asking him questions that would hurt. So there was silence and then I said good-bye and left.

Kapuściński then flew off to Europe and wrote this account. As a description of a country's descent into war, *Another Day of Life* is colourful. But, as a guide to the origins and causes of that war, it leaves one in confusion.

John O'Hara



# Sweetness and significance

Henry Gifford

HENRI TROYAT

Chekhov

Translated by Michael Henry Heim  
372pp. Macmillan, £14.95.  
033344119

"I have very little passion". Chekhov admitted to his friend and publisher Suvorin in 1887. He could claim equanimity instead: "Only people with equanimity can see things clearly, be fair and work . . .". It was an accurate assessment of his own character, almost of his oddity in a Russian setting. Lack of passion, a calm and steady detachment, are not the qualities to describe Dostoevsky, Tolstoy or Gogol, all of them subjects of previous biographies by Henri Troyat. Another, Pushkin, has been more often invoked for affinities with Chekhov. But Pushkin did not lack passion: the balance and harmony of his writing are the reconciliation of opposites or, to quote Turgenev's definition, "a particular blend of passion and serenity".

This equanimity, and the fairness of mind not always appreciated by Chekhov's contemporaries, endeared him to British readers, once Constance Garnett had made his work available in English. When the canonization of Chekhov — it was scarcely less — had been accepted, D. S. Mirsky attacked his cult in an impenetrable essay of 1927, "Chekhov and the English". Zamyatin had recently contrasted the law of revolution with the law of entropy, that inertia of human thought which he said only the heretic could cure. Mirsky, then living in England but well apprised of the new currents in Russian literature, explained the English approval of Chekhov as the compromise with the unheroic of a people wearied by the First World War. Chekhov's forerunner had been Samuel Butler, and the "new Butler-Chekhov harmony" represented "an ideal state of maximum entropy".

Mirsky's disparaging view of Chekhov, and of his attitude to civilization "as a system of purely negative values", could find ample support from the other Russian poets. Long afterwards Lydia Chukovskaya remonstrated with Akhmatova when the latter ridiculed her liking of Chekhov. All the Acemists, Chukovskaya told her, had shared this prejudice. They had wanted to throw him overboard from "the ship of modernity", just as the Futurists had laid hands on Pushkin and Tolstoy. Akhmatova took exception chiefly to Chekhov's plays, because the characters were "pitiful", incapable of heroism, and their situation was hopeless. She also resented his practice of portraying artists as triflers. Tsvetaeva confessed in a letter to Pasternak that from her childhood she had loathed Chekhov for his facetiousness. Khodasevich in 1929 contrasted him, the passive onlooker in an age of declining energies, with the eighteenth-century poet Derzhavin, who had actively taken part in building a state and a civilization.

Pasternak gave his verdict many years later, through his fictional hero Yuri Zhivago. In the journals Zhivago keeps during the first stay at Varykino, he notes a preference now for Pushkin and Chekhov, because of their "child-like Russian quality". This showed in "a shy unconcern with such resounding matters as the ultimate aims of mankind and their own salvation". They got on quietly with the immediate tasks of writing, unlike Gogol, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky "preparing themselves for death". And now this concentration of Pushkin and Chekhov on the merely personal had become of common interest. It was like an apple ready to be taken from the tree, "opening more and more in sweetness and significance".

Zhivago must be assumed to have written this in 1918 or 1919, but Pasternak was telling the story after some thirty years of dearly bought experience. The unheroic and private voice of Chekhov has not been drowned by the atridencies of our own time. Equanimity is as difficult for us to attain as it had been for Chekhov, and freedom from prejudice does not characterize the late twentieth century. For this reason a new biography of Chekhov, even if it adds little to what is known already, comes as an apt reminder of the "sweetness and significance" that Zhivago found.

Henri Troyat's book — the French edition of which was reviewed by Virginia Llewellyn

Smith in the *TLS* of January 11, 1985 — is eminently readable, well shaped and lively in tempo. It deals boldly and vividly with the life of Chekhov in all its vicissitudes, rising from poverty and hardship to a brilliant success at the age of twenty-seven, but already under the shadow of tuberculosis, to end with the extraordinary swansong in the major plays, performed by Chekhov's "own" company, the Moscow Art Theatre, to the joy and exasperation of their stricken author. Troyat relies on the letters of Chekhov and on personal memoirs long familiar to the specialist. All quotations from Russian, it should be noted, are rendered with care from the originals, not the French, by Michael Henry Heim, who collaborated with Simon Karlinsky in *Anton Chekhov's Life and Thought: Selected letters and commentary* (1975). The translation is reliable and brisk. Ronald Hingley's *A New Life of Chekhov* (reviewed in the *TLS* of August 6, 1976), very similar in its broad interpretation, is richer in detail; it has more to say about the stories and plays; and it fills in the background more tellingly, as when it discusses those comic magazines for which Antosha Chekhonte first wrote so assiduously. Still, for the general reader who wants a true likeness of Chekhov, Troyat's biography can be recommended.

One French critic, quoted on the dust-jacket of the English edition, praises the work for being "written in the style of a novel, and what a novel!" His meaning is evident from the first chapter, set in the decay and tedium of Taganrog, as its barbour on the Sea of Azov silted up. A passage from the memoirs of Alexander Chekhov, the eldest brother, discloses a shivering little boy, Antoo himself, unable to learn his Latin grammar because their despotic father required him to keep the shop. "When I was a child", Chekhov said, "I had no childhood", and the "novel" here is purely Dickensian. Not surprisingly the work that established Chekhov as a serious writer, "The Steppe" (1888), is set in the consciousness of an unhappy small boy, Egorushka, going out to confront the world in a boarding school far from home.

Chekhov's grandfather had been a serf, and the upbringing of Chekhov himself by his domineering and facetiously pious father, a totally incompetent business man, was the least likely of all, one would have supposed, to produce a humane and tolerant adult. From an early age he was compelled to take on responsibilities, the two elder brothers being talented but feeble. After his father's bankruptcy and flight to Moscow, where the family soon fol-

lowed him, Anton at the age of sixteen was left behind to support himself and continue his education. From the age of twenty, as a medical student in Moscow, he became virtual head of the household and its main breadwinner.

The misery of his childhood (relieved a little by such things as visits to the country estate where his grandfather was steward) suggests one parallel in that time. The poet Fyodor Sologub, three years younger, grew up in fairly similar circumstances and endured the same floggings (even as an adult) but from his mother. Khodasevich says of him, "in those days it was not easy for a man of such origins to 'make his way'". Sologub shares with Chekhov an inner solitude: this compelled him to withdraw suddenly even when he had guests in the house. Chekhov's self-control in this respect was superior, though his presence could be fairly remote. The Ukrainian writer Potapenko, a witness more reliable than most, speaks of him as thinking always about his literary work, and this set "a certain distance" between Chekhov and his friends. Unlike Sologub, in the latter's youth, he was indifferent to politics. Sologub for a while got swept into the revolutionary movement at least to the extent of writing verse with civic import. But Chekhov, wholly occupied as a student with his medical studies and the writing of little stories to help out the expenses at home, bled aloof. He was unmoved by the slogans of his contemporaries. He did not care for people with "convictions" and the rhetoric of the closed mind.

The 1880s and 90s in Russia are named not after the age of Chekhov. This is appropriate so far as concerns the emptiness and provincialism of those decades, which became his favourite theme. Taganrog's prosperity was dwindling, but otherwise it was almost a stereotype of the small town in those days. The social dominance of the Greek merchants might seem to link it more with cosmopolitan Odessa, but it shared none of Odessa's artistic life. Chekhov, revisiting the place after eight years, was appalled by the material interests of its people, the filth and inconvenience and general benightedness. "There are no patriots, no business men, no poets, or even decent bakers." To one impulse of the age he responded for a few years, interesting himself in the teachings of Tolstoy, but he concluded regretfully that he could never become a Tolstoyan. He prized most the "civilization expressed in carpets, sprung carriages and wit" — an attitude much closer to that of Tolstoy's wife. Or again: "Reason and justice tell me there's more love for mankind in electricity

and steam than in Christianity and vegetarianism." Here he takes his place unexpectedly in a line stretching from Belinsky to Lenin. He was more a utilitarian than a visionary, even though extravagant hopes of a world utterly transformed in another two or three hundred years were often on the lips of his characters in the later work. Chekhov might have liked such dreams to be firmly his own, but for the most part they are framed in irony.

His solitariness made him all the more attentive a chronicler of the age, and his compass was wide — from the country landowners in decline through the professional and shop-keeping classes to the Russian village, described by him with such unwelcome candour in the eyes of the intelligentsia when he wrote "The Peasants" (1897). Intellectually he might be said to have lived almost in a vacuum, shunning neither the political notions of the progressives who believed as he did in working for a future founded on reason and science, nor the new fascination with "decadence" and mysticism in art. Chekhov had small interest in poetry, and unlike Bryusov for instance or Balmont did not look to the West for examples of artistic innovation. As a young man he had been forced to economize his time, and he later insisted that "the artist must pass judgment only on what he understands". For Chekhov that meant prose fiction and contemporary plays, of which he was an excellent judge. His was a deliberate specialization: he saw himself as the man of letters, or *littérateur*, and knew exactly his province and its needs. The *littérateur* must be a professional of good conscience, making his scrupulous report on the humdrum absurdities and frustrations of common life, and on its hopeless inadequacy.

His famous visit to 1890 to the penal colony of Sakhalin, involving a long and arduous journey, and an excessive burden of note-taking on arrival, was more than belated amends for not practising medicine as his main occupation. Only just before the old writer Grigorievich urged him in 1886 to show more respect for his talent, frittered away in small comic pieces, he had argued that "medicine takes itself seriously", unlike "the game of literature". Even when it turned into a much more earnest game, with undoubted dignity in the calling, Chekhov was not wholly satisfied with it. He was always ready to abandon his writing for causes like famine relief, or leading a campaign to prevent cholera in the district, or founding schools and endowing Taganrog with three hundred French classics for the public library. Troyat quotes a reflection set down by him: "How good it would be if each of us left behind a school, a well, or something similar, so our lives would not slip into eternity without trace."

Chekhov was easily bored, as the Russian world around him in those muffled years of repression was by and large bored. Even if Pasternak, when writing *Doctor Zhivago*, came to admire Chekhov's modesty and quiet attention to the needs of the moment, it seems unlikely that his hero owes much to the example of Chekhov. Zhivago too was a private and independent man, and likewise an onlooker (though curiously inert). The main difference between them is that Zhivago, always aware of his vocation as an artist, does not suffer from boredom. Chekhov is described by Troyat as "a great lover of commotion and new faces", another way of saying that habitually he sought distraction.

It is extraordinary that Chekhov allowed himself so little quiet. He gathered his demanding family around him, and endured with private complaint but outward courtesy the penalties of fame, in the shape of continual visitors and aspiring writers who sought his help. At Melikhovo where he bought himself a modest country estate he was always prepared to give medical attention to peasants from near and far. It was only when his tuberculosis hid became a really grave threat that he could be persuaded to drop some of these commitments. He felt the same compulsion to work that distinguished many British melancholics of the nineteenth century, like Carlyle, Huxley and Darwin, driven on by the need to justify themselves in the absence of a religious faith. But it never brought him near to breakdown. Chekhov told a friend in 1892 how in his childhood he was made to sing with his two elder brothers in the choir under their father's

THOM GUNN

direction. "Everyone looked at us and was moved. They envied my parents, but we felt like little convicts . . .". From that age onward he had no religion, even though like Hardy he was not indifferent, as his late story "The Bishop" shows, to the appeal of corporate worship. But like the proverbial doctor (apart from Yuri Zhivago) he was pragmatic and sceptical. Troyat, noting the comparisons made between Chekhov's "A Dreary Story" (1889) and Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886), in both of which the idea of death has to be confronted by a man whose life in retrospect seems to him worthless, contrasts the torture undergone by Tolstoy to retain his Christian belief with Chekhov's "dignified and serene lack of faith".

His dignity is undeniable. He impressed contemporaries by his self-possession and a modesty that would have been impossible in someone less assured of his merits. In Troyat's book there is a photograph of Chekhov taken a few months before he died. He stands with his dogs in front of the villa at Yalta. In a black felt hat, closely buttoned overcoat, well-pressed trousers and shining black shoes, leaning on his stick and glancing down through pince-nez on a card, he is the exemplary professional man of his day, a savant setting out on a meditative stroll. But this image, however carefully sustained, belies the restlessness of that time, when, separated from his wife and the Moscow Art Theatre company, he longed to escape from the monotony of Yalta. Chekhov is serene in his writing, with a perfect control that holds in check the melancholy and despair. However, his eagerness always to be in some other place, and the speed with which disillusionment followed every change of location, do not speak of serenity in his life.

Some of those who knew him well, and particularly the women whose relation with Chekhov was tantalizing because of his brilliant footwork, from sudden advance to fatal reserve, suspected him of coldness. One of them who had been constantly teased in this way, Lika Mizinova, insisted: "You have always been indifferent to people and their foibles and imperfections." Potapenko went so far as to assert that he had no friends, though many believed themselves to be such. Undoubtedly he listened carefully and sympathetically to others; he busied himself on their behalf; he gave excellent advice. And his loyalty to Suvorin was remarkable. Suvorin, a highly successful publisher, and a former liberal whose opinions had veered towards the

extreme right, seemed to many a questionable friend for Chekhov. But Chekhov was grateful for his interest, and Suvorin's newspaper *Novoe Vremya* had the largest circulation in Petersburg. He also admired Suvorin as a self-made man, distinguished, in Troyat's words, by "great energy, loyalty and culture". Suvorin's politics did not matter to Chekhov, who disliked the opposing camp for their censorious desire to dictate public opinion. His alliance with Suvorin, for a long time cordial enough, with a readiness to speak freely, lasted until the Dreyfus affair in 1897, when they took opposite sides. Chekhov protested at the "abominable tone" of *Novoe Vremya* in dealing with the issues, and defended Zola: "There is a purity



and moral integrity in him that no one suspected." To the same letter to Suvorin he defined memorably his own view of the relation between art and politics. "Major writers and artists", he said, "should engage in politics only enough to protect themselves from it."

His friendship with Suvorin weakened thereafter, with genuine regret on his part. He had also by that time changed his publisher. Chekhov cannot have been blind long before to their differences, but his inner reserve must have enabled him to overlook these. Gorky he liked, but did not spare criticism of his weaknesses. Tolstoy was drawn to Chekhov and longed to have influence over him. But his eldest son Sergey reports that his father always

## In polite society

T. J. Binyon

WILLIAM MILLS TODD III

*Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin:*

*Ideology, institutions and narrative*

265pp. Harvard University Press. £15.95.

0674299450

William Mills Todd's aim is to combine literary theory, the social history of literature, cultural history and literary interpretation in the examination of three early nineteenth-century Russian novels — Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Gogol's *Dead Souls*. *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* is particularly concerned with the way in which these works relate to, and deal with, their immediate social context, the "polite society" of their time.

The first of the two introductory chapters sets out to define and describe the ideology of the period, and is at once the most abstract and the least satisfactory. Professor Todd seems not wholly at ease in the subject, and the impression is strengthened when evidence is constrained to bear more weight than it can. In support of his argument that the ideology of polite society led to a fragmentation of personality, Todd quotes the future metropolitan writer: "the first lesson of living in society is learning to become more or less a chameleon". And Vladimir Solov'ev on Pushkin, who "never had a dominant central content to his personality. He had simply a lively, open, unusually receptive soul that responded to everything and nothing more." But can either of

these comments be said to express the horror Todd later attributes to them? Furthermore, the observations seem in no way specific, either to Russian society, or to the period. Indeed, for a comparatist Todd is oddly blinkered in his comments on culture, referring to general phenomena as if they were true only of Russia in the 1820s; as when he remarks that: "Fashion established hierarchies of regiments" — something true of all armies at all times. The second chapter, however, is a brief but brilliant survey of the institutions of literature at this time, touching on the decline in patronage, the rise of the literary salon, the appearance of the professional writer, and the attempts to create a profession of letters.

The next three chapters are the meat of the book, treating *Eugene Onegin*, *A Hero of Our Time* and *Dead Souls* primarily in their relation to polite society, the one representing it as a harmonious whole, the second as an arena for vicious competition, and the last travestying and destroying it. Todd points out that Pushkin's oscillations between art and life in *Eugene Onegin* have led critics to view the novel either exclusively as a triumph of form, or as a representation of reality: as, in Belinsky's words, "an encyclopaedia of Russian life". He proposes and attempts a synthesis of the two readings: the arguments are subtle, fluent and persuasive, but unfortunately and inexplicably he has chosen to refer not to the Russian original, nor to a literal translation, but to Walter Arndt's version in verse. Whatever its poetic merits, this translation is sometimes inaccurate and always padded, verbose and periphrastic, leading Todd, on occasion, wildly

felt in Chekhov "a silent resistance, and a kind of frontier hindered further intimacy between them".

He made "a silent resistance", as we have noted, to women and to the idea of marriage. When Suvorin in 1895 urged him to marry, he agreed to, but only on strict terms. The wife must live in Moscow, and he in the country. She must be like the moon, not perpetually in his sky; and anyway it wouldn't particularly help with the writing. Chekhov valued his own freedom, his inviolability, too much to be ready for a lasting tie, and it has to be admitted that he behaved unkindly with the girls who attracted him. Worse was the treatment of his devoted sister Marya, when a serious offer of marriage was made to her and she sought his advice. He blighted the possibility by extreme coldness, because he could not do without her. Olga Krupner, the leading actress of the Moscow Art Theatre, had to conduct a campaign of great skills and resourcefulness finally to bring him to marriage. They were genuinely fond of each other, but, fortunately for Chekhov, she could not face giving up her career in order to look after him. Although he pines for her in his letters, he seems to have preferred it that way. Chekhov remained to the end a solitary.

The story of this enigmatic man has always exerted a fascination over his readers. Very soon after his death he became the figure of legend that dazzled the English in the 1920s. The sentimental Kuprin, already in 1905, could picture him in these terms:

How often he must have thought about the coming happiness of mankind when in the mornings alone he silently pruned his roses or attentively cared for a young shoot damaged by the wind. How much there was in this thought of meek, wise and submissive self-forgetfulness.

Chekhov, who could curb a gushing lady by changing the conversation to marmalade, would have been upset by Kuprin's rapture. He was impersonal in his writing, but few people are consistently wise in their lives, and Chekhov's meekness was rather a mildness of manner, his submissiveness the patience of one who had learned to endure the folly of others. He was certainly not oblivious of self. Henri Troyat maintains that his concern was never without its egotism. That is probably true of connoisseurs to a great many cases, and we can be grateful to Troyat for presenting in his book a fully human Chekhov, in his few failings and his considerable strength. Nor will it be ungracious to add that the final place to encounter Chekhov, like any great writer, is in his art.

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## Flying high

## Anne Chisholm

**JANET AITKEN KIDD**  
*The Beaverbrook Girl: An autobiography*  
 240pp. Collins. £12.95.  
 0002176025

Most children of famous fathers find life in the parental shadow difficult. Janet Aitken, born in 1908, was the eldest of Lord Beaverbrook's three children, his only daughter and his favourite; she seems, from this breezy, superficial sketch of an autobiography, to have enjoyed rather than resented the relationship. She recalls her father, by and large, with love. He thought, and she agrees, that they were alike in temperament, while his two sons took after their mother, the patient Gladys, whose devotion Beaverbrook openly exploited. On the evidence of her book, Janet had little or no interest in journalism, history or politics, the ruling passions of Beaverbrook's life; but she shared, at the least, her father's tendency to asthma, keen interest in the opposite sex, and restless vitality.

Mrs Aitken Kidd grew up at Cherley in Surrey, accustomed to money and the casual presence of the famous. She had a childhood crush on Lloyd George and became quite fond of Arnold Bennett and Rudyard Kipling; but her main interest was in her pony and her best friend was her groom, who started her by telling her the facts of life in the stables. Her father to her rage, would eject her from his private cinema when a love scene began, but she grew up knowing that he was unfaithful to her adored mother. A. J. P. Taylor was discreet about Beaverbrook's many love affairs in his biography (1972), but Janet Aitken Kidd is frank – though in a gossipy rather than a censorious manner.

Although she claims that the General Strike of 1926, which caused her coming-out ball to be postponed, awakened in her "the first small

pinprick of a social conscience" there is not much evidence of it in her predictable account of life in the 1920s – the Charleston, the treasure hunts, Michael Arlen, Deauville. At nineteen she made the first of two rash aristocratic marriages, to the handsome but deplorable Ian Campbell, the future Duke of Argyll, who took her to a brothel on their wedding night and turned out to be a hopeless gambler. When the marriage collapsed Janet went home for a while to her father, who took her to stay with Ribbentrop for the 1936 Olympic Games. Her account of this visit is the best episode in the book, although one suspects that it is only with hindsight that the roar of the crowd and the handsome young Nazis strike her as more sinister than exciting.

Her second husband, was one Drogo Montague, who humiliated her by chasing other women but at least taught her to fly. She loved fast cars and planes, as did her brothers, and they all quarrelled with Beaverbrook over the risks. After various nasty falls and crashes, Kidd was still flying in her sixties, when she qualified as a helicopter pilot. During the war she was close to a glamorous group of Battle of Britain pilots and married one of them, a Canadian like her father, Edward Kidd. They had two children and were happy breeding carriage horses for nearly forty years in England and Barbados, where in her widowhood she has taken up painting.

It is hard to tell whether it is reticence, affection or lack of insight that prevents the author from giving a particularly memorable or revealing account of her remarkable father, who none the less dominates her book. She does not write well and has not been helped by her publishers, who can hardly have edited her at all. The book is full of solecisms and elementary misspellings of names – Randolph Churchill, going "to kiss the king". Much use has been made of A. J. P. Taylor's book, but Beaverbrook remains as enigmatic as ever, his powerful hold over people's emotions still a mystery.

## Among the thought people

## Lydia Gerend

**JOY GRANT**  
*Stella Benson: A biography*  
 339pp. Macmillan. £16.95.  
 0333393171

When Stella Benson died in 1933 at the age of forty-one, she left behind eight novels, several travel and poetry books, numerous short stories and articles. But she also left a diary, kept for more than thirty years, which, she hinted to friends, was of greater value than all the rest put together. Like many diarists, she felt doubtful about the public worth of so private an activity: "Nothing at all of any interest to outsiders." None the less, she agreed to have it deposited in Cambridge University Library after her death (with a fifty-year embargo on its opening), and her handwriting is so clear as to suggest courtesy towards some future reader. Joy Grant draws heavily on the diary for her biography and, with equal courtesy, allows Stella to tell much of her own story.

Stella was born in 1892 to "strenuously undemonstrative" parents on a large Shropshire estate founded on an eighteenth-century slave-trade and shipping fortune. With the father away most of the time spending money and the sons at boarding-school, the family mansion was left, leaving Stella and her mother to years of restless wandering between hotels and rented houses. Stella was extremely frail all her life, partly deaf and with a weak chest which gave her such frequent bouts of pleurisy and bronchitis that she lived life between illnesses with reckless compensatory vigour. At twenty-two she left her oppressive mother and started an independent life in London, supplementing a modest private income with suffragette work at first and then, when the war began, social work in the East End. She cared passionately about her down-and-outs but knew her compassion was too thinly spread. All her life she craved the intense relationships she imagined "real girls" had, but she regarded herself as "too cold-blooded" and too bodiless ("Of all things in the world I most loathe sensuality") to achieve them. Instead, she had her secret world of "thought people". She was aware of the danger that they could displace reality altogether and was relieved to discover that writing fiction decreased their power while providing her with a sense of identity at last.

## The spoils and the spoiling

## Frances Partridge

**JULIAN FANE**  
*Memories of My Mother*  
 148pp. Hamish Hamilton/St George's. £12.50.  
 0 241.12120 5

Julian Fane's name on the title-page of a book guarantees that it will be written with elegance and sensitivity. His first and perhaps best-known work, *Morning*, was inspired by memories of his own childhood at Lyegrove in Gloucestershire, the house where his mother spent a large part of her life. In *Memories of My Mother*, he illuminates the past with the twin lights of filial piety and family pride – the first an instinctive emotion towards the closest of relatives, to whom life itself is owed; the second finding satisfaction in the courage and achievements of ancestors, "for", as Fane modestly writes, "reflected glory of the gallant kind is better than none". His book is fuelled by both emotions: roughly two-thirds of it is concerned with his mother, Diana, Countess of Westmorland, and the rest with the brilliant circle from which she was descended – the distinguished world of the Souls and the doomed generation that followed them.

Diana later was born and grew up in a privileged environment, but she met with more than her share of catastrophe. The beautiful, popular and rich daughter of the dashing, temperamental Lord Ribblesdale of Sargent's famous portrait, she was three times married between the ages of twenty and thirty, and three times widowed by the time she was fifty-five. Her last husband, Percy Wyndham, was killed in action in 1914 after seventeen months

of marriage. Her second, Arthur Capel (an attractive, unfaithful, half-French tycoon), died in a motor smash in 1918. One does not get the impression that the third and longest-lasting marriage, to the 14th Earl of Westmorland, was happy, although it was in a sense a spoiled life, immensely rich and depending on the presence of more than twenty servants, not counting the gardeners. When the Earl died, his life of reckless intemperance and gambling (together with serious embezzlement by her solicitor) left his widow too impoverished to maintain adequately the house and garden she adored.

Diana Westmorland had plenty of "character". She disapproved of her second son's making literature his career. This was perhaps why he "didn't know his mother very well" until the last twenty-five years of her life, when he took to paying her regular visits at Lyegrove. The story of her last lonely span of life is vividly and movingly told. House and garden were crumbling around her, but "she had the primitive attachment of a peasant to the soil of her home". "She was in favour of laughter, had had enough of tears". She began to be happier than ever before.

A personal postscript: I was taken to tea at Lyegrove on a wintry evening of the last year of its owner's life – her ninetieth. Our hostess sat at a long bare table in her front hall. When the tea-tray arrived with silver teapot, cake and a pile of sandwiches, a tall youthful voice said, almost teasingly: "You must try the sandwiches. I've invented, and tell me what you think of them." They were terrible sandwiches, made of thick brown bread, stuffed with cold British sausages and carrots, but their creation was unforgettablely delightful.

## Hard and hope-free

## Mick Imlah

**PETER READING**  
*Siet*  
 Unnumbered pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.  
 0 436 40985 5

Always amusingly self-conscious, Peter Reading has two ways of dealing with the impotence of his own skills. On the one hand, he has cultivated a strop-scepticism ("Verse is fuck-all use" etc); on the other, he likes to pretend a naive fascination with what used to be called "numbers", the mad science of metrical craft. Titles like "Trio" (1976), "10 x 10 x 10" (1977), "5" (1979), "5 x 5 x 5 x 5 x 5" (1983) and the Roman C (1984) show an enduring commitment to arbitrary schemes:

One might as well invent any kind of structure (ten stanzas each of ten lines each of ten syllables might be a good one), the subject matter could be anything

Betrayed to a role as the less important of two random elements, "subject matter" frequently evaporates altogether, leaving only the count, either of actual lacunae or of joke ones like the "plinkplinka plinkplinka plonk" line of *Ukulele Music* – light verse gone completely wrong.

*Essential Reading* (a selection from nine volumes published since 1984) has not been put together in this numerical spirit, nor with much respect for the careful plotting that the editor, Alan Jenkins, identifies in all the recent books. No work is given complete, and selection is paradoxically more pointless the closer it gets to the forbidden wholes; of the 100 100-word units of C, a book which is first and last a virtuosic response to a single structural challenge, we get sixty-seven. Anyone who is seriously interested in Reading's strange achievements (and this may be the point) will still have to seek out half-a-dozen separate volumes.

Meanwhile, *Essential Reading* may be most interesting for its sampler of light verse written by James Fenton and John Fuller in collaboration, the reader meets an Aztec priest named Hotwatdabotl, a woman who is "Shaven under the armpits", a Rudyard Kipling who is "born too soon" to eat Mr Kipling cakes, a centenarian who is still on the pill, and a chef who serves raspberry gravy. The cast of characters, anyway, is as lively and eccentric as one could wish.

The book opens engagingly with "The Thing that People Do". If Noel Coward echoes urbanely here and there (as in "Ob the thing some people do, / The thing some people do, / The thing you oad the oafment for / If you don't want a botcheroo"), his is a blithe and welcome ghost; one accepts him simply as another collaborator. True, the poem may go on a stanza or two too long. Here and elsewhere throughout these pages the reader may feel that rather much is being made of rather

A new stage in poetry's decline is marked by the collapse of the numerical principle in *Ukulele Music* (1985) and in *Siet*, a scruffy new book deprived of the smallest structural flourish. Like the twin giraffe-jacketed riddles containing the funerals of Tom O'Bedlam's Bealities

– the disorder of *Siet* imitates a more general madness. Untitled bits of verse are strewn about its forty-eight unnumbered pages as though the shaping imagination really has been snagged by the way things are; lengths of an interview with an astrophysicist are offered more for the sake of their texture than as texts to be read through (no one will read them through, except in the hope of finding them to be not what they are). The numbers used here, and there are a lot of them, are pointedly inessential; not three, five, ten, but unimaginably high (10,000 million light years) or shapeless (21.105 cm, the wavelength at which hydrogen atoms radiate). In this world-view, the unwriteable "hydrogen line" has displaced the Imperial pentameter.

*Siet* opens with the news of King George VI's death, broadcast into the seven-year-old poet's wholesome family kitchen, and from then on, historically and formally, it's "post-coronation disintegration". Though Reading's adopted county of Shropshire is a flavoursome microcosm, the scope is national, and military matters come to the fore for the first time in his writing. In one of few extended poems, the "Falklands do" is seen to have revived the perennial precariousness of the military flower of England; here the "cropped boys" are "slight, acned, raw cadets", more flattened oars than roses. Pseudo-warriors, they are threatened (like the "pseudo-rural" landscape through which their buffet car judders them) by old annities and modern toxins:

The peaceful fields are littered with new lambs fattening up for Easter, SO, pretty canny yelow against grey,

## Brad Leithauser

**JAMES FENTON and JOHN FULLER**  
*Partingtime Hall*  
 70pp. Viking Salamander. £7.50.  
 0948681 055

In *Partingtime Hall*, a volume of light verse written by James Fenton and John Fuller in collaboration, the reader meets an Aztec priest named Hotwatdabotl, a woman who is "Shaven under the armpits", a Rudyard Kipling who is "born too soon" to eat Mr Kipling cakes, a centenarian who is still on the pill, and a chef who serves raspberry gravy. The cast of characters, anyway, is as lively and eccentric as one could wish.

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sweals from atark plant (the voguish acid rain) Long Lives vibrate, totter towards the edge.

In minor extenuation, Reading offers sensible thanks for his own increasing distance from conscription, and a bleakly rational, bottom-of-the-barrel patriotism: "cruelty and mess, I suppose, may be worse elsewhere than here".

In such an ungovernable literary realm the injunction *Siet* refers firstly to Reading's style of passive editing: "impartial" was his epithet for cancer, and here it fits his democratic posture of letting everyone have their say, no matter how artless, or dull, or wrong. He fails to intercept four pious poems from the "Dear Prudence" page of *Comfy Home*, and admits the grinding platitudes of a Shropshire pub seer, complete with misspellings. This latter harps weakly on the only justification for his presence in the book: "All got the different ideas like, so we got to accept it." A similar assertion is made in something close to Reading's own voice, firmly impotent, that we should "acknowledge, not acquiesce"; and he submits us accordingly to things that good taste or poetic sensibility or editorial discretion or the rules of English might prefer to cancel. Among these is his continuing play with tabloid atrocities: "He don't invent it you know", as *Ukulele Music* forewarned squeamish critics.

More obscurely, *Siet* is also an aimless general prayer against deletion/death. In a difficult paradox, the "different" manias of the "Isler-amies", IRA, "Paisleyists" etc require not our acquiescence but bitter acknowledgement, because theirs is a condition of everyone else's survival in the text, as well as a threat to our survival outside it: as public opinion general-

lity, and may even regard the book's choicest details (like the racy woman who drives a Vulva, or the rhyming of "anatomy" and "that to me") as merely clever. But at a time when light verse is ailing in England, and moribund in America, there may no longer by anything "mere" about poetic cleverness.

Most of the verse assembled here is lubricious. The "dirty poem" has often proved a surprisingly tough and unyielding genre. Whether it is Shakespeare rolling out his unpeeped jest about cuckold's horns or Swift recolling in horror from Celia's undergarments, the disreputable joke is apt to grow thin in a hurry – indeed, to have thinned away to nothing before the telling is done. Interestingly, the most successful dirty poems are frequently anonymous creations – many of them limericks – in which an unstudied, randy vigour can prove irresistible.

For a dirty poem to succeed in the hands of a craftsman – and both Fenton and Fuller are adroit technicians – it usually must succeed on two levels. On the primary level, it delivers the forbidden goods: that choice naughtiness which stiffs in the reader both a childish glee and a huffy condescension rooted perhaps in embarrassment at his own childishness. On the secondary level, the poet confronts us with a thoroughly adult blend of wit and technical

## And No Help Came

Where would you look for blessing who are caught  
 In published acres of millennia  
 By ravishments of salt and raucous saints  
 Or janissaries drilling a Big Bang?  
 You'd seek the parish of the poor, far from  
 The high grandstands of words and notes and paints.

And when you drove your flagged and honking jeep  
 Among the huts of starving, brutalized  
 Dependents, you might chance to hear them playing  
 Sentimental songs of flowers and moons  
 Chiefly to keep them safe from art, whose gods  
 Build palaces adorned with scenes of flaying.

PETER PORTER

zingly has it, "Dying's too good / for vermin like this' [so we stay alive]". This Darwinian virtue of staying alive – "Going On" as an earlier sequence has it – however painful the personal, hostile the social, or precarious the global environment, is epitomized in Viv, the cleaning lady of *Ukulele Music*. Viv's tenacious adherence to health and employment (as well as her plumping for "pawse" to speak in) raises her above a group of fringe flatterers, whose instinct to survive is pitted hopelessly against sickness or inadequacy, with typically pathetic effects: the endearing confessor of *Siet* ("Tell you what, old chap, *strictly* between ourselves, / I have a *leette* personal whatsaname – / utterly *vital* I drink daily, / *huge* amounts, otherwise get so damn sad") is of the same litter as the obsolescent hedge-pleacher of Onibury, technologically ill-equipped to deal with his wife's death ("he held the phone in two paws like a sad dog / gnawing a bone, not knowing which end apoke . . ."), and the yet-uncast duo who must act out the futureless formulae of the cancer manual: "Phrase questions to receive very simple answers, e.g.: 'There is jelly and ice cream or egg custard – would you like jelly and ice cream?' These are among the 'hundreds of poor sad losers every week' for whose separate plights Reading has an unusual instinct ("sad" is another of those words, like "prose", that make unequivocal demands on the reader's sympathy). As Reading's abuse of his own art dies down, this whisped feeling for the runnsh, for all the fossil layers of obscure experience, may emerge as the keynote of a hard, hope-free but (essentially) humane body of work.

finesse which cannot be condescended to. Naughty though it assuredly is, one cannot condescend, for example, to this limerick of Auden's, with its lively comic pacing and its merry clangour:

The bishop-elect of Hong Kong  
 Had a dong that was twelve inches long.  
 He thought the spectators  
 Were admiring his galters  
 When he went to the gents". He was wrong.

or to this stanza about a lewd mother superior in Fenton and Fuller's "Nuns":

"I'd like you to borrow this text  
 To work on before we have Sex.  
 Don't follow its strictures,  
 Just look at the pictures.  
 It should make a difference. Next!"

Unfortunately, there are a number of moments in *Partingtime Hall* when the wit runs dry (oot in the sense of refined but of depleted) and the reader's two-tiered system of enjoyment collapses. The dirty poem that fails usually does so ingloriously, and a number of poems here ("Chlorine Gardens, Belfast", "The Red Light District Nurse", "The Sexy Old Ladies of Havergo Hill") are at best partial successes. Where invention flags, the authors' glee seems to undergo a subtle, undesirable shift – as subtle, but as fundamental, as the difference between a smile and a smirk.

Much, if not all, is compensated for by the book's long, float, title poem, subtitled "A film script" (published in the TLS on April 10). It begins as another piece of high-spirited madcap (the first rhyme is "eternity" and "burn it, he"), but by the conclusion of its 328 lines an oddly moving narrative has been unfolded which includes four deaths – those of a father, a mother, a son, and the son's tutor (and mother's lover). As in Auden's "Miss Gee", or even Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark", the poem proves the more affecting and spooky for its air of distant coldness. As the subtle forewarns, the characters are stock, gorgeously outsize creations – particularly the fabulously rich mother, Lolly, and her lover, McDiarmid, whose "trousers and nostrils were equally flared". Lolly and McDiarmid end up on a Swiss lake, picturesquely enough, exchanging vows and threats while precariously seated in a dinghy; its capsizing, and their drowning, are taken in with quiet relish by Anton, the icy butler, who observes them through a telescope. The reader who dips into *Partingtime Hall* should find the air breezy and the waters bracing.

Just in case



## Living in the filth

Tim Dooley

JAMES KELMAN  
*Greyhound for Breakfast*  
230pp. Secker and Warburg. £10.95.  
043623283 9

An unemployed man with a back complaint finds himself unexpectedly at the head of a queue in his doctor's surgery. Equally unexpectedly the doctor offers the patient a coffee and begins to confide in him.

Aye, he says, this job, it's worse than you think. He grinned suddenly, he reached to plug in the kettle, then returned to the chair. I was reading that yin of Kafka's last night, "The Country Doctor" - you read it?

Eh, yes, I says.  
Gives me the fucking willies . . .

The comic incongruity (which intensifies as the story, "In with the doctor", develops) draws attention to two potentially conflicting tendencies - proletarian realism and experimental modernism - which James Kelman's fiction more typically attempts to resolve. The world of Kelman's stories is particular and limited. "It's a fucking dump of a city this, every cunt's skint." His Glasgow men on the "broo" or in dead-end jobs drink, smoke, gamble and neglect or sentimentalize their womenfolk and "weasos".

Ronnie in the title story of *Greyhound for Breakfast* is a typical Kelman character. He has spent "eighty notes" on a greyhound which he realizes he is incapable of feeding, let alone racing. Now he wanders by the side of the Clyde, ashamed to go home and admit his mistake, worried that his wife and daughters will be worrying about him and worried about his son who has just left for London:

London for fuck sake, what could happen down there, things were bad down there, weans on the street, having to sell themselves to get by, the things that were happening down there, down in London, to young lassies and boys, it wasn't fucking fair, it

was just fucking terrible, it was so fucking terrible you couldn't fucking man you fucking Jesus Christ trying to think about that was Christ it was so fucking terrible, it was bad.

The breakdown of language, the repeated obscenities are symptomatic of a communicative collapse which besets many figures in *Greyhound for Breakfast*, and implies a wider crisis about meaning, a deeper obscenity in society at large. Kelman resists the temptation to make emotional or political capital out of exploited and impoverished lives. His stories are often deliberately inconclusive - as if rejecting the notion that an existence has been captured and understood. Some are fragment-

ary, others extraordinarily short - a paragraph or so in length. In one such, "An Old Story", a speaker comments, "But you've got to tell it. Unless . . . if it's no really a story at all." Some display still undigested influences, touches of Beckett or Böll - there is even a rather Borgesian piece about an incident from the Tain ("Dum Vivimus, Vivamus"). Kelman's commitment to local patterns of speech, however violent or vulgar, is shared with other Glasgow writers - notably Tom Leonard. Where he is most his own writer, however, Kelman convinces his readers that something does need to be told, that there is something new to learn about what a story might "really" be.

## Drinking partners

Brian McCabe

AGNES OWENS  
*Like Birds in the Wilderness*  
138pp. Fourth Estate. £9.95.  
0 94795 51 0

At the close of *Gentlemen of the West*, Agnes Owens's first novel, the young bricklayer Mac is made redundant and is faced with the bleak prospect of long-term unemployment in a small, stagnant west-of-Scotland town lacking in amenities. There is the Paxton Arms, a place for serious drinkers; the derelict Drive, a small-town version of skid row where Mac's elders hang out, drinking liquor from unlabeled bottles; the bus stance and the cemetery. This is the desolate little world in which the young Mac, already developing a meaningful relationship with alcohol, is more or less doomed, like his elders in the Drive, to become a "full-time alcoholic" - unless he leaves town in search of work.

So, in *Like Birds in the Wilderness* we find our innocent, loutish but fundamentally decent

young brickie tramping the streets of an unnamed city in the oil-rich north - where else could it be but Aberdeen? - seeking the humble fortune of a regular wage packet, enough to keep him in beer and fags and pay for his digs. The Labour Exchange sends him along to a seedy but strictly run lodging house - no drink, no women, no pets, no eating, no music - where he meets Jimmy, who helps him to find work on a building site, and Nancy, who "looked as sensational as a model from a clothing catalogue".

A large part of the novel is devoted to this unlikely match between the brickie and the classy dame, and their failure to overcome their class-bound attitudes results in the failure of the relationship. Yet the conflict between the two is never developed beyond a few trivial disputes over how to eat chicken or what one should do with one's litter.

Though the novel is rich in incident, the many anecdotes lack narrative logic. The bait offered to the reader consists in finding out what a mysterious organization called Lifeline is, run by a "toff", a cardboard cut-out complete with handlebar moustache, who makes Mac a vague promise of work. Lifeline turns out to be a CIA-style outfit, if a little more amateur, in which the members infiltrate radical organizations in order to identify the ring-leaders.

If this sounds a little far-fetched for Aberdeen, the credibility of the entire novel is severely jeopardized by the stylized dialect many of the characters speak. Yet Mac's narration is standard English, often poetical, and at times archaic. The gap results in a sense of dislocation throughout the novel which in turn does nothing for the coherence of the plot. Perhaps a more interesting sequel to *Gentlemen of the West* might have kept Mac at home.

## Into the valley

Christopher Hawtree

DENTON WELCH  
*Fragments of a Life Story: The collected short writings*  
Edited by Michael De-la-Noy  
595pp. Penguin. £5.95.  
0 14 007620 4

A memorable sentence in Clive James's *Brilliant Creatures* (1983) described a publisher as being the most nearly successful in reviving the reputation of Denton Welch. It seems a long time ago. With a biography and an edition of his *Complete Journals* in circulation, Michael De-la-Noy has now gathered fifty-nine pieces, many of them unpublished and fragmentary, in which Welch again offers variations on his short tragic life.

At only a penny a page this time, it is a tale which has none the less come to seem rather expensive. In fact "precious" might be more accurate. "All over the countryside is the ghost-web thing, each tiniest object soaked and saturated in its atmosphere," runs a meditation on Kent. Neatly observed, it is a passage to be read with some pleasure. And yet, and yet, "already 200 pages in, one longs for the next one not to begin." The secret life that comes with loneliness feeds all to dreams and ghosts, I go for a walk in Kent and inevitably my footstep leads me down a forgotten

## Back-chat

Jo-Ann Goodwin

GILLIAN TINDALL  
*To the City*  
181pp. Hutchinson. £9.95  
0 09 170540 1

*To the City*, as the title suggests, describes a journey, an odyssey undertaken by the central character, Joe Beech. It is a journey towards the European past, a past he left behind over forty-five years ago, fleeing from the Holocaust which was about to envelop his native city of Vienna. Beech has seemingly been assimilated into a new life. He is a thriving publisher, popular with his friends; his children have "turned out well"; his wife is an archetype of genteel Englishness, his marriage an emblem of the successful surmounting of his past.

His security appears to be complete. When he sets out on a skiing holiday with family and friends, the past begins to return to him, and his final journey, a return to Vienna to meet his mistress Anna, grows in significance as the holiday proceeds. Memories of his father, mother and sister, all victims of the Nazis, trouble him with increasing persistence. The death of Ted Litvak, a friend and father-figure, further complicates his relationship with the city he is about to visit. As the tensions within him increase, it is clear that when Beech eventually reaches Vienna, the experience will result in some kind of personal revelation.

The bulk of the novel describes the effects of the skiing holiday, and the two families who make up the Beech/Lovell holiday party. Their discussions turn on the concerns of the middle-class and middle-aged. The strains of one's job, the difficulties and satisfactions of having children, and, inevitably, the disappointments of marriage, the attractions and dangers of infidelity. The reader may repeatedly wonder whether he or she cares in the least. There is the novel an over-articulation of emotional problems that is both self-indulgent and turgid. That part of the book which would have merited real development - Joe Beech's relation to his past and the city of Vienna - disappears beneath a weight of Hampstead chatter. If Joe Beech's past is momentous and "traumatic" (to use one of Tindall's favourite terms), his present is trivial and complacent, despite the *Angst* which he professes so frequently. The writing is drab and suffers from a lack of proper pacing - this is unfortunate, as Gillian Tindall's initial ideas are promising, and occasional passages which rise above the persistent obsession with the inconsequential suggest the possibility of the better book she might have written had there been more recourse to self-discipline and structure.

narrow valley to the edge of a black pool hemmed round with thicket.

If such backgrounds, at home or abroad, are sometimes scarcely visible from afar - so detailed have they become in refraction through Welch's memory - his characters, clothed or otherwise, can be terrifying in their vividness. Such is the alcoholic progress of "Constance, Lady Willett", whose son is himself troubled: "Poor darling Mark, she thought, no money, no sense, no stamina. Only a silly Edwardian batonettey and the weakest of literary urges. Those teeth, his growing stomach and his disappearing hair! What was to be done?"

It is a world away from the recollection of meeting Lord Berners one morning in the Ritz Hotel. No sooner had he bounced in and taken some snuff than he remarked, "My eyes are still brown, but, as you can see, most of my hair seems to have flown!" We laughed together, as if decay were all a joke. "Berners" jokes some more, signs a copy of one of his novels with his name larger than that of the recipient, and duly leaves after a visit to the lavatory which raises curious questions of decorum in the narrator's mind. In the space of three pages, the building has become a real part of him, benign with a hint of unease. He watched him trotting down the pavement. He looked like a busy, useful Easter Egg setting out on its daily round. And I felt lonely. It is loneliness that has prompted each searching of the past here, the results alternately appear and subvert.

## Evoking and persuading

Roy Porter

LUDMILLA JORDANOVA (Editor)  
*Languages of Nature: Critical essays on science and literature*  
351pp. Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Road, London N7 9RQ. £25 (paperback, £8.95).  
09466033 6

Breakthroughs in scholarship set daunting problems. Armour-clad in their neologisms, innovators all too often seem to write only for their cliques of epigones, and the ever-widening gulf between the academic star-trekking and the earth-bound classroom textbook becomes the despair of everyone teaching undergraduate courses. A warm welcome is therefore due to this collection of essays for aiming to bridge one of these gaps, by presenting new research on the relations between science and literature, at a level readily accessible to students, by way of a series of "focused case studies". And, thanks above all to an enviably disciplined and lucid introduction and set of commentaries by the editor, Ludmilla Jordanova, it succeeds substantially in its goals.

Literary studies and academic history of science developed as separate specialisms, reflecting and reinforcing the notion of "two cultures". Indeed, the Snow-Leavis controversy itself produced little more than a token trickle of studies of the so-called "influence" of literature on science and (more commonly) of science on the humanities. But, as Raymond Williams stresses in his foreword, scholarship has since moved on. Science has been shown to be less "objective", and writing less "inspirational", and both can now be regarded as moments within a common culture, articulated through a single language. Concepts such as "production", "authority" and "Nature" seem to apply equally to both. Fiction has to establish the reality of its own world, and science has to evoke and persuade; and in doing so, both tap a joint linguistic reservoir of metaphors, images and associations. The implications of this "one culture" position - familiar enough to researchers - are set out with exemplary clarity in an introduction aimed at students new to this interdisciplinary field. Not least, the crucial importance of gender and sexuality to the late Enlightenment interplay of science and writing is rightly insisted upon.

The case studies which follow have somewhat mixed success in putting this programme into action. They certainly constitute a highly structured whole, involving a coherent sequence of English and French writers spanning the years from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Given the stress, however, on "one culture", there is a rather puzzling bias towards literary figures - a lot on La Fontaine, Sterne, George Eliot and Michael, but only one examination of a "major scientific text" (Gillian Beer on the *Origin of Species*). And, once the introduction has rightly informed us that interdisciplinary studies all too often focus upon the "soft" life sciences rather than the "hard" physical sciences, it is disappointing to find that all the science here discussed is of the "soft" variety - biology, physiology and psychology.

Some of the essays grapple more strenuously than others with the science/literature transfer. For instance, A. E. Pilkington's "Nature as an ethical norm in the Enlightenment", remains a straightforwardly perceptive exercise in the conventional history of ideas. But James Rodgers, in his study of sensibility, sympathy and benevolence in *Tristram Shandy*, energetically explores how Sterne exploited (up to the hilt) the suggestive semantic slippage between the physical and the moral which the physiology of irreflexivity and sensibility evoked. Moreover, taking up the theme of sexuality, he also shows how provocatively Sterne stood contemporary anxieties on their heads, by presenting Uncle Toby's modesty as the great source of erotic chaos.

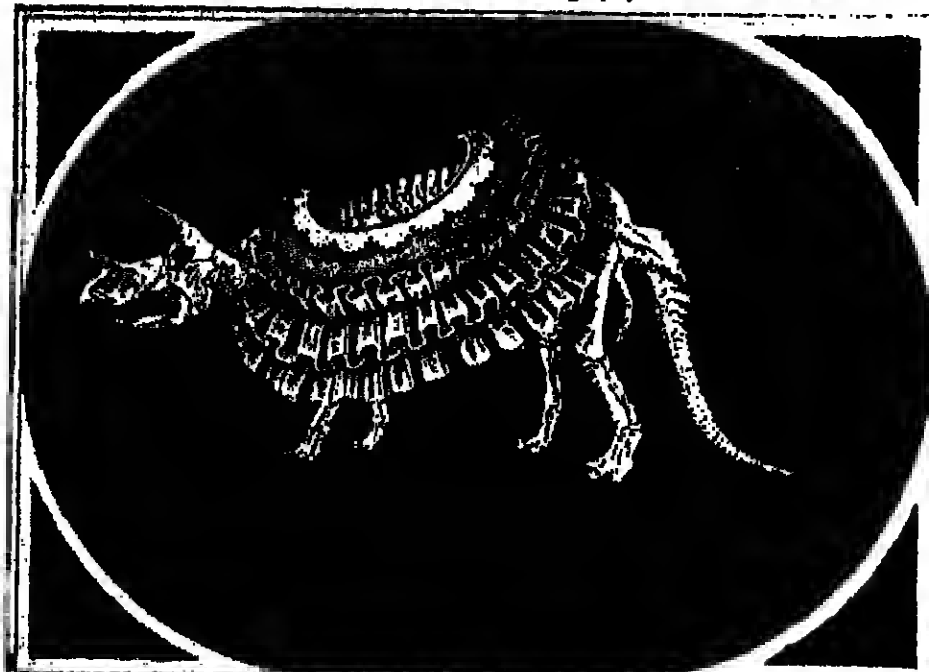
In many ways, the pivotal place in this collection must be Maureen McNeill's account of "The Scientific Muse: The poetry of Erasmus Darwin". For Darwin quite explicitly aimed to write an imagination under the banner of science, for as McNeill reasonably glosses this programme, aimed to serve up, in entertaining and enlightening form, a rendering of bourgeois ideology which was "scientific" in the sense of showing how the

onward march of technology, manufactures and capital were all integral to Nature's scheme of progress. There are many acute perceptions in McNeill's essay, not least her demonstration of how Darwin used rhetorical figures such as personification to project bourgeois values. In lines like

So Arkwright taught from Cotton-pods to curl  
And stretch in lines the vegetable wool

heroic inventors and their machines usurp the place of the actual human workforce. The labour processes of industrialization are totally mystified.

Elsewhere, however, her aim of producing a simple account surely leads to oversimplification. Thus McNeill claims that within his rationalization of bourgeois competition, Darwin presents war as "natural" (and thereby "lent legitimacy to the poverty and suffering of the lower orders during the early stages of industrialization in Britain"). Yet this reading, derived from a couplet in the *Temple of Na-*



Max Ernst's "Poster for Humane Virus", 1969, is reproduced from *Beyond Surrealism*, edited by Robert Rabinowitz (192pp. Oxford University Press. Paperback, £13.50. 0 19 504990 X).

ture, is selective and tendentious. "I hate war", Darwin wrote elsewhere, and throughout his life was consistent not merely in denouncing warfare wholesale, but in attributing it not to nature but to the evil machinations of despots and priests. McNeill is right to argue that the language of science could provide a language for naturalizing social evils, and thus create a secular theodicy; but - a point Gillian Beer stresses in her subtle analysis of Erasmus Darwin's grandson - we ourselves in turn must avoid the temptation of mechanically reducing such authors to mouthpieces.

It is all to the good that these essays avoid getting bogged down in plotting "influences". Questions of the relations between ideas and ideas, writers and writers, won't, however, go away that easily. Their surface, for example, in an acute form in Jordanova's own piece, "Naturalizing the family", which explores attitudes towards family and gender in late Enlightenment France. Here a discussion of Cabanis's views on female physiology is followed by an analysis of *Paul et Virginie* and *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (both of which predate Cabanis). Shared concerns are established. But don't we need to go beyond parallels and analogies? Or if not, aren't we back with that old warhorse, the spirit of the age?

It is revealing that this issue is not addressed in the introduction. Foucault's "discourses" and "epistemes" formed one attempt to escape from this impasse; but the introduction is curiously reticent on Foucault, and almost totally silent on subsequent post-structuralist and deconstructionist attempts to find new ways of reading texts. It is a pity these techniques aren't addressed, because today's students, eager to get to grips with the latest Paris fashions, need commentators with minds as clear as Jordanova's. Perhaps the omission indicates that this book has simply been too long in the production-line. Two of the essays have already long since appeared as part of lengthier books and the otherwise excellent bibliography is thin on recent publications. Despite these blemishes, however, this book can be warmly recommended both as a focus for debate and as a major teaching aid.

## Thinking ahead

Stuart Sutherland

J. Z. YOUNG  
*Philosophy and the Brain*  
233pp. Oxford University Press. £12.95.  
0 19 219215 9

J. Z. Young transformed the face of anatomy and zoology by his insistence that to understand a bodily organ it is necessary first to consider its function. He expressed this view, with detailed examples, in *The Life of Invertebrates* and *The Life of Vertebrates*, which were followed by *An Introduction to the Study of Man*. Many of his friends had hoped that he would complete his upward progression through the animal kingdom with a *Life of J. Z. Young*, a book that would be as interesting and informative as his previous ones. Instead, he has written *Philosophy and the Brain*: although it does not have quite the fascination of an autobiography, it is no mean substitute.

First, he suggests that philosophers, a body of men whose capacities he appears to overrate, can help brain scientists solve such knotty points as consciousness and freedom of the will: they have clearly not yet done so and there is no evidence to suggest that they ever will.

Second, Young believes that increased knowledge of the brain will help philosophers resolve such problems as the relationship between mind and body. His own solution is that they are one and the same thing. Although this "identity" theory is fashionable, it does not seem to solve anything: if a neurosurgeon pokes an electrode into a woman's brain, he does not poke her consciousness. Young claims that "the conscious mind relates to dealings with the outside world, which require elaborate analysis". But it is unclear why such dealings require consciousness; it is doubtful if we would ascribe consciousness to a supercomputer that could deal with the outside world in ways similar to our own. His attempt to resolve the problem of freedom of the will is equally unsatisfactory. He points out that the brain is extremely complex and contains many different "programs" but that its activities are still, presumably, determined by its physical constitution. He tries to wriggle round the problem of physical determinism by observing that it is difficult to forecast the voluntary choices that people make. But if one took this argument seriously it would be necessary to attribute free will to the weather. Little, if anything, worth reading has ever been written on freedom of the will or the mind-body problem, so Young can hardly be blamed for failing where no one has succeeded.

The third way in which he reveals his optimism is that he believes we should "devote our energies to increasing understanding of . . . our brains and so . . . improve the quality of life". He is not talking about better drugs for mental illness - indeed all the existing families of psychotropic drugs were discovered by chance and their use has nothing to do with scientific knowledge about the brain. He believes that a better understanding of ourselves will lead to a better society - to better upbringing, better education, and more care and love between people. This could happen. On the other hand, increased knowledge of the brain would make possible both the society of *Brave New World*, in which people are kept subservient but happy through drugs, and the world of *Walden Two*, in which a ruling class manipulates the rest of society by psychological means. There is no technological advance that cannot be used for evil as well as good, and scientific knowledge of the brain is no exception.

Young carries his belief in the benefits of brain science even further by asserting that it will improve our values. Again, this seems highly questionable. Knowing what are the brain mechanisms that produce - on rare occasions - rational behaviour tells one nothing about what rationality is; similarly, knowing how a person came to acquire a particular set of values tells one nothing about whether they are good values or bad values.

There are other reasons why direct work on the brain is unlikely in the foreseeable future to bring the benefits Young envisages. Despite fascinating advances, our knowledge remains rudimentary. We know nothing about what most of those millions of cortical columns actually do. And although there may be a causal relationship between the functioning of certain neurotransmitters and moods, nobody has any idea how it is mediated. Moreover, behaviour, let alone consciousness, cannot be explained in terms of the functioning of individual nerve cells or individual neurotransmitters. It depends on the organization of the nervous system, and to describe this organization requires concepts totally foreign to brain scientists and more akin to those used in psychology or artificial intelligence. Finally, as Young has emphasized for other bodily organs, it is essential not merely to look inside the brain but to specify its function - the nature of the tasks it performs - if we are ever truly to understand how it does what it does.

The means by which hunger and thirst are controlled have been largely, though not entirely, elucidated. Moreover, there are pathways that when stimulated appear to yield pleasure: if a rat can produce a small electric shock to such a pathway in its own brain by pressing a bar, it will seek euphoria by pressing repeatedly until it has to desist from sheer fatigue.

Young describes in impeccable prose all these and many other phenomena, and his book can be read with profit by the layman for its clear and zealous description of the brain. He treats his subject with unusual optimism, which manifests itself in three ways.

## Princeton University Press



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This study, based largely on Chinese journals rarely available to Western scholars, explores the abrupt turnabout of Chinese views of the Soviet Union from condemnations of "revisionism" to appreciation for problems common to both countries. The Sino-Soviet split has eased, and Gilbert Rozman now investigates Chinese writings on Soviet affairs to find a lively forum for differing Chinese opinions on the history of socialism and on current problems of socialist reform.

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John C. H. 1987



# Outlining a science of feeling

B. F. Skinner

A review of Gerald Zariff's *Behaviorism: A conceptual reconstruction in the TLS of July 19, 1985*, begins with a story about two behaviourists. They make love, and then one of them says, "That was fine for you. How was it for me?" The reviewer, P. N. Johnson-Laird, insists that there is a "vicissitude" with behaviourist theory. Behaviourists are not supposed to have feelings, or at least to admit that they have them. Of the many ways in which behaviourism has been misunderstood for so many years, that is perhaps the commonest.

A possibly excessive concern for "objectivity" may have caused the trouble. Methodological behaviourists, like logical positivists, argued that science must confine itself to events that can be observed by two or more people; truth must be truth by agreement. What one sees through introspection does not qualify. There is a private world of feelings and states of mind, but it is out of reach of a second person and hence of science. That was not a very satisfactory position, of course. How people feel is often as important as what they do.

Randall behaviourism has never taken that line. Feeling is a kind of sensory action, like seeing or hearing. We see it twice, for example, and we also feel it. That is not quite like feeling depressed, of course. We know something about the organs with which we feel the jacket but little, if anything, about those with which we feel depressed. We can also feel the jacket by running our fingers over the cloth to increase the stimulation, but there does not seem to be any way to feel of depression. We have other ways of sensing the jacket, and we do various things with it. In other words, we have other ways of knowing what we are feeling. But what are we feeling when we feel depressed?

William James anticipated the behaviourist's answer: what we feel is a condition of our body. We do not cry because we are sad, said James, we are sad because we cry. That was fudging a little, of course, because we do much more than cry when we feel sad, and we can feel sad when we are not crying, but it was pointing in the right direction: what we feel is bodily conditions. Physiologists will eventually observe them in another way, if they observe any other part of the body. Walter B. Cannon's *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage* (1929) was an early study of a few conditions often felt. Meanwhile, we ourselves can

respond to them directly. We do so in two different ways. For example, we respond to stimuli from our joints and muscles in one way when we move about and in a different way when we say that we feel relaxed or lame. We respond to an empty stomach in one way when we eat and in a different way when we say that we are hungry.

The verbal responses in those examples are the products of special contingencies of reinforcement. They are arranged by listeners, and they are especially hard to arrange when what is being talked about is out of the listener's reach, as it usually is when it is within the speaker's skin. The very privacy which suggests that we ought to know our own bodies especially well is a severe handicap for reinforcement. We may see the child take a hard fall, for example, and say, "That must have hurt", or we see the child wince and ask, "Does something hurt?" We can respond only to the blow or the wince, but the child also feels a private stimulus and may say "hurt" when it occurs again without a public accompaniment. Since public and private events seldom coincide exactly, words for feelings have never been taught as successfully as words for objects. Perhaps that is why philosophers and psychologists so seldom agree when talking about feelings and states of mind, and why there is no acceptable science of feeling.

For centuries, of course, it has been said that we behave in given ways because of our feelings. We are sad because we feel hungry, strike because we feel angry, and in general do what we feel like doing. If that were true, our faulty knowledge of feelings would be disastrous. No science of behaviour would be possible. But what is felt is not an initial or initiating cause. William James was quite wrong about his "becauses". We do not cry because we are sad or feel sad because we cry; we cry and feel sad because something has happened. (Perhaps someone we loved has died.) It is easy to mistake what we feel as a cause because we feel it while we are behaving (or even before we behave), but the events which are actually responsible for what we do (and hence what we feel) lie in the possibly distant past. The ex-

perimental analysis of behaviour advances our understanding of feelings by clarifying the roles of both past and present environments. Here are three examples.

LOVE. A critic has said that for a behaviourist "I love you" means "You reinforce my behaviour" rather than "You reinforce me", because it is behaviour, not the behaving person, that is reinforced, in the sense of strengthened; but they would say much more. There is no doubt a reinforcing element in loving. Everything lovers do that brings them closer together or keeps them from being separated is reinforced by those consequences, and that is why they spend so much time together as they can. We describe the private effect of a reinforcer when we say that it "pleases us" or "makes us feel good", and in that sense "I love you" means "You please me or make me feel good". But the contingencies responsible for what is felt must be analysed further.

The Greeks had three words for love, and they are still useful. Mentalistic psychologists may try to distinguish among them by looking at how love feels but much more can be learned from the relevant contingencies of selection, both natural selection and operant reinforcement. *Eros* is usually taken to mean sexual love, in part no doubt because the word erotic is derived from it. It is that part of making love that is due to natural selection; we share it with other species. (Many forms of parental love are also due to natural selection and are also examples of *eros*. To call mother love erotic is not to call it sexual.) Erotic lovemaking may also be modified by operant conditioning, but a genetic connection survives, because the susceptibility to reinforcement by sexual contact is an evolved trait. (Variations which have made individuals more susceptible have increased their sexual activity and hence their contribution to the future of the species.) In most other species the genetic tendency is the stronger. Courtship rituals and modes of copulation vary little from individual to individual and are usually related to optimal times of conception and seasons for the bearing of offspring. In *homo sapiens* sexual reinforcement predominates and yields a much greater frequency and variety of lovemaking.

*Philia* refers to a different kind of reinforcing consequence and, hence, a different state to be felt and called love. The root *phil* appears in words like philosophy (love of wisdom) and philately (love of postage stamps), but other things are loved in that way when the root word is not used. People say they "love Brahms" when they are inclined to listen to his works—perform them, perhaps, or go to concerts where they are performed, or play recordings. People who "love Renoir" tend to go to exhibitions of his paintings or buy them (alas, usually copies of them) to be looked at. People who "love Dickens" tend to acquire and read his books. We say the same thing about places ("I love Vienna"), subject-matters ("I love astronomy"), characters in fiction ("I love Daisy Miller"), kinds of people ("I love children"), and, of course, friends in whom we have no erotic interest. (It is sometimes hard to distinguish between *eros* and *philia*. Those who "love Brahms" may report that they play or listen to his works almost erotically, and courtship and lovemaking are sometimes practiced as forms of art.)

If we can say that *eros* is primarily a matter of natural selection and *philia* of operant conditioning, then *agape* represents a third process of selection—cultural evolution. *Agape* comes from a word meaning to welcome or, as a dictionary puts it, "to receive gladly". By showing that we are pleased when another person joins us, we reinforce joining. The direction of reinforcement is reversed. It is not our behaviour but the behaviour of those we love that is reinforced. The principal effect is on the group. By showing that we are pleased by what other people do, we reinforce the doing and thus strengthen the group.

The direction of reinforcement is also reversed in *eros* if the manner in which we make love is affected by signs that our lover is pleased. It is also reversed in *philia* when our love for Brahms, for example, takes the form of founding or joining a society for the promotion of his works, or when we show our love for Venice by contributing to a fund to preserve the city. We also show a kind of *agape* when we honour heroes, leaders, scientists and others

from whose achievement we have profited. We are said to "worship" them in the etymological sense of proclaiming their worth. (When we say that we venerate them the ven is from the Latin *venus*, which meant any kind of pleasing thing.) Worship is the commoner word when speaking of the love of god, for which the New Testament used *agape*.

A reversed direction of reinforcement must be explained, especially when it calls for sacrifice. We may act to please a lover because our own pleasure is then increased, but why should we do so when it is not? We may promote the works of Brahms or help save Venice because we then have more opportunities to enjoy them, but why should we do so when that is not the case? The primary reinforcing consequences of *agape* are, in fact, artificial. They are contrived by our culture and control, moreover, just because the kind of thing we then do has helped the culture solve its problems and survive.

ANXIETY. Very different states of the body are generated by aversive stimuli, and they are felt in different ways. Many years ago W. K. Estes and I were rash enough to report an experiment in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (1941, 29, pp 390-400) under the title, "Some quantitative properties of anxiety", although we were writing about rats. A hungry rat pressed a lever at a low, steady rate, under intermittent reinforcement with bits of food. Once or twice during an hour-long session, we sounded a tone for three minutes and then lightly shocked the rat through its feet. At first neither the tone nor the shock had any marked effect on the rate of responding, but the rat soon began to respond more slowly while the tone was sounding and eventually stopped altogether. Under rather similar circumstances a person might say, "I stopped what I was doing because I felt anxious".

In that experiment, the disrupted behaviour was produced by intermittent operant reinforcement, but the disruption would usually be attributed to respondent (classical or Pavlovian) conditioning. There is a problem, however. A change in probability of responding or rate of responding is not properly called a response. Moreover, since the shock itself did not suppress responding, there was a substitution of the stimuli. The reduced rate seems, paradoxically, to be the innate effect of a necessarily conditioned stimulus.

A paraphrased comment of Freud's begins as follows: "A person experiences anxiety in a situation of danger and helplessness". A "situation of danger" is a situation that resembles one in which painful things have happened. Our rat was in a situation of danger while the tone was sounding. It was "helpless" in the sense that it could do nothing to stop the tone or escape. The state of its body was presumably similar to the state a person would feel in anxiety, although the verbal contingencies needed for a response comparable to "I feel anxious" were lacking.

The paraphrase of Freud continues: "If the situation threatens to recur in later life, the person experiences anxiety as a signal of impending danger." (It would be better to say "impending harm", because what threatens to recur is the aversive event—the shock for the rat and perhaps something like an automobile accident for the person, but what actually recurs is the condition that preceded that event—the tone, or, say, riding with a reckless driver.) The quotation makes the point that the condition felt as anxiety begins to act as a second conditioned aversive stimulus. As soon as the tone began to generate a particular state of the rat's body, the state itself stood in the same relation to the shock as the tone, and it should have begun to have the same effect. Anxiety thus becomes self-perpetuating and even self-intensifying. "A person might say, 'I feel anxious, and something terrible always happens when I feel that way', but the contingencies yield a better analysis than any report of how self-perpetuated anxiety feels.

FEAR. A different result would have followed in our experiment if the shock had been contingent upon a response—in other words, if pressing had been punished. The rat would also have stopped pressing, but the bodily state would have been different. It would probably have been called fear. Anxiety is perhaps a kind of fear (we could say that the rat was

## Letters

### Government and Education

Sir—Here is a phenomenon to be explained. Between 1979 and 1986-7 government expenditure on higher education has increased in real terms by 3.2 per cent. The total number of students has risen from 778,000 to 934,000 (full-time) from 510,000 to 594,000. The relevant Age Participation Index has increased from 12.4 to 14.2. And among the major nations Britain now has the third highest proportion (after Japan and the United States) of degrees and higher diplomas per 100 of the relevant age group.

And yet the response of your correspondents to George Walden's letter (March 27) represents a widespread view in higher education circles that the Government is "mounting a rash course in decline" (T. J. Reed, April 3); that for the Government "the principle of full investment in our young people's training can go wrong" (Reed, April 24); that its educational and cultural policies are "destructive" (George Bernard, April 24); that it has a "blunderbuss approach to higher education"; and that—a classical scholar misquoting Tacitus—it has created "a desert" where once the academy flourished (Richard Janko, April 3).

The phenomenon to be explained is the wide gap between this hysterical—nay, paranoid—rhetoric, and the facts.

It seems to me that what we find here goes deeper than the traditional *odinium academicum*, or even the disdain for dry-as-dust faculty characteristic of a certain kind of neohumanism. What I see here are the misadventures of a cultural crisis of the kind which has always in history led to a phase of individualism and detachment from reality on the part of those suffering it. What is happening is that a university culture determined by a set of values and interests is finding itself challenged by other values and interests, in a fashion which many of those involved in it find deeply threatening.

Let me try out some broad-brush history. Until the late nineteenth century the University was subordinated to wider interests—the moral, and that if they are to make the study in that of the modern foundations. But the growth and diversification of knowledge, and of the class of academic "producers", led to the promulgation of increasingly insistent claims for the autonomy of academia. Paradoxically it was the confirmation of the military potentialities of science in the First World War that won the argument for academic freedom and purity. The political class—Whitehall mandarins and politicians more and more recruited from among graduates, especially of Oxbridge—were persuaded that the advantages to be won from the pursuit of knowledge were best obtained from the universities under conditions of pluralism, non-interference and academic self-determination.

Thus was established the university culture which now finds itself in crisis. Mixing scientific positivism, Arnoldian high-mindedness and the latent corruptions of the person's freedom, the essence of this culture lay in the power which it gave to the producer-interests. And the exercise of this power by its beneficiaries led to systems of payment and tenure of extraordinary rigidity and protectiveness, to working arrangements (staff-student ratios; teaching hours; academic vacations) of remarkable generosity, and to a pattern of research and teaching strikingly detached from the interests and concerns of the world outside the academy.

As the costs of this system mounted—an eightfold increase in real terms between 1950 and 1985—it was inevitable that its presuppositions should be called into question by those required to finance it. And so throughout the Western world—where the same trends had produced similar results—the structures, financing and funding of universities have been the subject of painful reappraisal over the past decade. In Britain this has been even more painful than elsewhere, in part because the role of academic pluralism and self-determination was deeper here than elsewhere; and in part because of government over education is more pervasive in Britain than elsewhere. The result has been a series of negotiations between the state and the universities of our academics (the

Oxbridge standard) and the increasingly pitiful relative performance of the national economy.

The central concern of this government is, surely correctly, the strengthening of that economy, upon which so much else depends. In relation to the universities the issues were at first too narrowly conceived by government, simply as one field of application of its wider programme of reducing the burden of public expenditure. But more and more it has been understood that the universities are central to the strategic design of Britain's economic revival, and that if they are to make the contribution they must the apparatus and ethos of the self-regarding academic producer-monopoly must be dismantled.

So the issue is no longer simply one of value for money—important as this is, and scandalously neglected for so long. In science we need to correct the imbalance between producer-led "pure" work and demand-led "applied" work (while retaining our historic strength in basic science); and we must break down the cultural and institutional gulfs between the universities, industry and commerce. In research in general, we need a greater clarity of purpose, more rigorous standards, greater accountability. And throughout the processes of teaching and learning we need to correct the bias to academic self-reproduction, foster respect for a wider range of vocational values, and induce a greater sense of direction on the part of both the doers and the students.

Hence the battery of innovations now being developed—the opening up of tenure for closer inspection, the facility for more diversified pay-structures, the fostering both by pressure and by encouragement of links with industry, the improvement of the researcher's incentive to exploit intellectual property, the monitoring of research by the UGC and its new interest in quality and selectivity, the movement towards student loans, etc., etc.

All of these add up to a massive intrusion of new values and interests into the *hormis conclusus* of our producer-dominated universities—part of a wider historical movement from a rentier culture of wealth-consumption and the redistribution of wealth towards a more entrepreneurial culture directed to wealth-creation. More and more accustomed to believe that under their stewardship all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, our academics now find themselves facing some rude questions. Are your students getting from you what you are paid to give them? How good is your research, actually? Are you working hard enough? What attention, if any, do you pay to the real costs of what you are doing? Does anybody outside the secret garden have the remotest interest in what you are doing? Is your department/college not carrying an unacceptably high proportion of passengers? Do you object to being paid relatively less so that Professor X can be paid more to stop his brain draining? May we review your tenure so that, if you are played out, you can make room for younger, brighter, talent? What sort of responsibility do you feel to that world outside which pays for your work?

These are surely uncomfortable questions, especially for those who know, deep within themselves, that their answers will deserve an "NS". But I wonder whether they are not questions which we might have expected a truly reflective and responsible academic class to have put to itself, long before outsiders felt compelled to pose them?

ROBERT JACKSON.  
House of Commons.

Sir—The answer to Noel Annan's offensive question to Richard Janko (Letters, April 10) is, quite simply, "no". Of course those of us who have been trying to become university teachers in Britain in recent years did not expect the whole scheme of things to be maintained in existence merely for our benefit. We could see clearly enough that the universities could not be insulated against the wholesale "rationalization" of the country's economy and institutions in which so many of our friends and contemporaries were caught up. But we did not expect either that the outcome of years of hard work and painful acquisition of both knowledge and teaching experience would be our generation's virtual exclusion from the profession, or that our chief reward would be the contempt of our political masters and the

complacent indifference of their academic toadies. Professor Janko and others, including myself, have been fortunate; most of those in our situation have not. If Lord Annan cannot or will not understand our feelings, he could at least refrain from patronizing us.

STEVEN BOTTERILL.  
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### Special Relationship?

Sir—The "Special Relationship" will survive Robert B. Reich's review (March 6) as it has survived other tribulations. The "Special Relationship" is not a policy but a fact—a fact of history which reflects not only a shared devotion to Shakespeare and Jane Austen but the congruent interests of Great Britain and the United States in world politics since 1783. While the "Special Relationship" will change in the future, as it has changed in the past, it will remain "special" as long as both countries are willing to take active responsibility for their common security interests, which are now identical.

Professor Reich's review demonstrates why the sin of pride is always the most corrosive problem foreign offices have to face in the care and feeding of alliances.

Reich is an American intellectual who writes with verve on many aspects of public policy. Diplomatic history, however, is not among his specialties. In his review, he repeats a claim which a number of Englishmen have put forward in the past—that in the making and conduct of foreign policy Britain possesses wisdom and vision which raw, ignorant, parochial America desperately needs and cannot afford to lose.

It is a sound rule of alliance diplomacy for each ally to concentrate on its own mistakes, not those of its partners. To recall Churchill's quip about Attlee, we all have a great deal to be modest about. Both Britain and the United States have made catastrophic mistakes, sometimes separately, more often together. Both world wars occurred, after all, because British foreign policy failed. The list of important American mistakes since 1945 includes the failure to insist on the fulfillment of the Soviet promises made at Yalta and Potsdam—a joint Anglo-American mistake—and the handling of Indo-China since 1954, of Suez and Hungary in 1956, and of Cuba since the 1950s, which were mainly American. The moral of the story is not that one ally is wiser than the other but that both should address their common (and difficult) problems with all the intelligence and judgment they can collectively muster up, and above all without the irritant of cheap and shallow xenophobia.

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### 'Sport, Power and Culture'

Sir—Your reviewer Simon Green (April 10) takes exception to my book *Sport, Power and Culture: A social and historical analysis of popular sport in Britain* and would prefer us to celebrate sport in Britain with him and direct our critical attention elsewhere—at the Eastern bloc's sports politics, and at those Third World régimes who, in his words, "exploit the 'Glennegles Declaration'". We in the West, on the other hand, should be thankful that commerce has saved sport. Space does not permit me to deal fully with such complacency, indeed prejudice, but I would be grateful for the opportunity to correct the misleading impression conveyed about the book.

Contrary to what is asserted, I actually argue against reducing sport to the "power relations of capitalism", which I regard as one among the multiple sources of power. Neither do I make the ludicrous claim that a "political hegemony" represented by public-school sport was established over working-class culture as such. I am accused of indulging in conspiracy theory, of not elucidating my theoretical framework, and of putting forward untestable propositions. This is somewhat disingenuous. The basic concepts are, in fact, clearly set out in the opening chapter, and I do, as a matter of

fact, carefully adduce detailed evidence throughout. The trouble with Mr Green is that he either ignores the evidence altogether, or dismisses it out of hand. For example, I provide a good deal of statistical data on the commercialization of sports and the extent to which they are, consequently, drawn into the leisure and entertainment industries, and on the type and the scale of state intervention in sport—to which your reviewer's response is "No conclusion is quantified".

One could say a lot more, but lastly, we hardly need your reviewer to point out that sports are not central to national politics and economics. What is objectionable is his sleight of hand in using this truism to dismiss their centrality in the national culture and the significance this has for the relationship between sport and power.

JOHN HARGREAVES.  
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### The Case of Chung Sung-hyun

Sir—We have recently learned that Amnesty International has received reports of the arrest in March by the South Korean National Agency for Security Planning of Chung Sung-hyun, director of the Chongnyon-sa Publishing Company. Chung Sung-hyun, who graduated in philosophy from Seoul National University, is now believed to be undergoing interrogation about a book his company was in the process of publishing, entitled *What is Philosophy?*. Chung's relatives have reportedly not been allowed to visit him, and we fear that he may have been ill-treated during his interrogation.

We would like to express our concern at reports that Chung Sung-hyun is being detained for the peaceful expression of his views and for making possible such expression by others. We would also like to urge that his relatives and lawyer be allowed immediate access to him and to seek assurances from the appropriate authorities of the Republic of Korea that Chung Sung-hyun not be subjected to any form of ill-treatment. Finally, we ask that concerned members of the public, and of the philosophical, academic and publishing communities, do what they can to ensure the protection of Chung Sung-hyun's rights to free speech and to freedom from bodily harm.

ALEXANDER GEORGE.  
RAYMOND KILBANSKY.  
DANIEL ISAACSON.  
MICHAEL DUMMETT.  
COLIN MCGINN.  
Sub-Faculty of Philosophy, 10 Merton Street, Oxford.

### The Amicable Grant

Sir—P. J. Gwynn's response (Letters, April 17) to my review of G. W. Bernard's *War, Taxation and Finance* strikes a note familiar to any teacher. "Why did you leave out such and such vital point?", you say. "But I mention it somewhere", comes the aggrieved reply.

Bernard does, of course, "quote verbatim" Norfolk's and Suffolk's advice that then was the time for the King "to call his Council unto him" (reviewers read books, too!) But nowhere does Bernard discuss the point; indeed, these pages do not even appear in the index under "king's council". Hardly more substantial is Bernard's treatment of Hall. He devotes page after page to rather tedious refutation of the hypothetical arguments that might be raised against his own case; he can spare only three pages, out of 159, to deal with the authoritative contemporary chronicler who presents a diametrically opposed interpretation of the Amicable Grant to his own.

DAVID STARKEY.  
Department of International History, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2.

### Marie Antoinette

Sir—I see with regret that in my review of Carlo Knight's *Il Giardiniere Inglese di Caserta* (April 3) I gave an incorrect date in referring to the execution of Maria Antoinette in 1793. The proper date was October 16 of that year.

FRANCIS STEENMULLER.  
200 East 66 Street, New York, New York 10021.

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# COMMENTARY

## Literary leanings

April FitzLyon

ALEXANDER DARGOMYSHSKY  
The Stone Guest  
Coliseum

In Russia in the 1860s – a decade of radical aesthetic theories and virulent polemics – the young Nationalist composers joined the verbal fray with a will, and opera, the height of their aspirations, was a central theme. But, although theories abounded, practice lagged behind; their important works were to come in the 1870s. Glinka had founded Russian opera; but after his death in 1857, no one had appeared to succeed him. The gap needed to be filled, if there was to be any continuity to the Russian school. Cui's *William Ratcliff* hardly fitted the bill; and the great success of Serov's *Judith* (1863) and *Rogodan* (1865) was particularly galling to the Nationalists, who had even made the unforgivable journey to Bayreuth. On the face of it, Dargomyshsky was not a candidate to succeed Glinka. His *Esmeralda* (1847) was based on French models, and he was considered a quirky autodidact, a dilettante. The Nationalists ignored him until his setting of Pushkin's *Ruslan*, poorly received in 1856, enjoyed a triumphant revival in 1866. Ironically, it was Serov who realized Dargomyshsky's potentialities, pointed out to him his natural bent for declamation, and encouraged him to write *The Stone Guest*. Dargomyshsky's avowed aims of "realism" and "artistic truth", although not, apparently, directly inspired by Chernyshevsky and other intellectual gurus of the day, fitted their theories; and his decision to make the music subordinate to the words

and to set Pushkin's "Little Tragedy" entirely to musical declamation or "melodic recitative" was revolutionary by any standards. The Five suddenly began to take Dargomyshsky seriously.

Dargomyshsky was far more literary than Glinka (who had allowed several hacks to mutilate Pushkin's *Ruslan* for him), and realized that Pushkin's words were ideally suited to musical setting. Like Musorgsky in *Boris Godunov*, he changed the text hardly at all. He probably chose *The Stone Guest* for its conciseness, and its language (sparse and natural) rather than for its dramatic possibilities. Pushkin's black, nineteenth-century drama owes little to Da Ponte's eighteenth-century conception. Pushkin's Don has killed the Commander (Donna Anna's husband, not her father), for no particular reason, before he even meets her. He invites the statue to stand guard outside her room while he visits her, and meets his end when the jealous statue arrives. There is no question of divine retribution. The subsidiary characters are merely foils to Don Juan, and lack psychological depth. For Pushkin, as for Dargomyshsky, it was the words which mattered.

Dargomyshsky died before quite completing *The Stone Guest*, which was orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov. The first performance (1872) was not a success; the St Petersburg audience was not interested in theories, and the opera is virtually devoid of tunes. It has never had a secure place in the repertoire; Tchaikovsky thought it "a sad aberration", and Turgenev called it "absurd nonsense". But its place in the Pantheon of Russian opera is secure. Reams have been written about it, often by people who have never seen it. All honour to the English National Opera that we can at last judge for ourselves.

## Flirting with freedom

E. S. Turner

FREDERICK LONSDALE  
Canaries Sometimes Sing  
Albany

The spirit of this 1929 comedy is that of Shakespeare's "poor cat in the adage": the cat would eat fish, but dare not wade its feet. Unconsummated adultery is in the air; wretchedly, the big push towards freedom is held back by the last strangle-weeds of decency. It is a time when women of the aristocracy boast that they have not dined alone with their husbands in two years (that's on the evidence of Lonsdale's daughter and biographer, Frances Donaldson). The husbands get around too; in *Canaries Sometimes Sing* a character sighs for the thousands of men who "smile in every home but their own". However, the theatre of the day is not yet ready for wife-swapping, so the sexes just take it out on each other in amusing bad manners.

For a fashionable playwright with only one flop, Lonsdale was unlucky in achieving only a single entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. "Don't keep finishing your sentences. I am not a bloody fool." It sounds like the man himself protesting, not one of his creations; for his players were required to be gifted in the exchange of intact epigrams, or near-epigrams, whittled these came naturally to the characterizations or not (speech could be clipped, but not the airy locutions). To audiences of the day no doubt wished they could trade polished insults as freely, just as onlookers at the Old Bailey aspired to rival the felicitous aperçus of the Sills.

Like *On Approval*, *Canaries Sometimes Sing* (from the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford) is an exercise for four players. It is a shade claustrophobic; one rather missees the butler, ready to accept a cigarette in a holder ("Do something with that for me, Charles, please"). We are in the home of Geoffrey Lymes, a prosperous playwright (Lonsdale was secure enough to tease himself) married to a culture vulture of a wife who lapses distressingly into baby-talk. Their guests are Ernest Mel-

ton, heir to a dukedom, married to an ex-chorus girl who calls him either "Rasputin" or "Sunny Jim". The four kindle to each other's partners and the only problem is how to avoid a switch-round. Lonsdale rears a wonderful slithery card-house of bumbag, self-righteousness, evasion, chicanery, hypocrisy, sheer Englishness, old school mores and social blackmail. There are some good, if unexciting jokes, as when Melton, trying his crass best to identify the composer whose work his hostess is playing, is trumped by his wife's suggestion: "Bolling". In the end the well-trodden cads simply lose their nerve. If that constitutes a moral ending, so be it; but surely, on the evidence of this piece, Lonsdale did not set out to comminate society, as has been suggested, but merely to have cruel fun.

It takes a certain effort to picture a well-off, witty, heterosexual playwright of the 1920s playing grass widower to a elly wife. By all accounts, Ronald Squire used to carry off the impersonation brilliantly. Peter Bowles, veteran of many a boudoirish television role, displays his own blend of aplomb, panache and

It works surprisingly well, despite the fact that we don't hear Pushkin's words, but only a serviceable translation by Paul Daniel and Joan Rodgers. Inevitably, many felicitous touches are lost – for example, Dargomyshsky stresses Leporollo's words so as to give him a Moscow accent – but much still survives. Dargomyshsky does occasionally lapse from "melodic recitative" into arioso passages, which break the monotony and heighten emotion. His technique, which seemed so avant-garde in the 1860s, now, after *Boris*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and other works, no longer shocks; it has acquired a period flavour, and pleased the audience. The orchestral accompaniment, despite several original touches, is rather monotonous and thin.

It is Graham Clark's evening; as Don Juan, he gives a fine performance and – all important in this opera – his words are always clearly enunciated. Kathryn Harries gives life to the rather pale character of Donna Anna. But the production lacks Pushkin's simplicity, and sometimes distorts his play. For example, Don Juan would never have had such geriatric friends, who make the seductive Laura (Sally Burgess) seem a Spanish Madame Cyn. Don Carlos's corpse is removed too early, so that Don Juan's cynicism in making love beside it is defused; and Don Juan's frantic attempts to escape his fate and rejoin Donna Anna make him a much more craven character than Pushkin intended. In the play, the end is ambiguous: does Don Juan really love Donna Anna, or is this just another seduction? We can't be sure. But the producer (Keith Warner) has no doubts, and opts for a romantic, Hoffmannesque interpretation. The programme, edited by Nicholas John, contains a wealth of background material, and should become a collector's piece.

prickly self-depreciation and is well on top of his lines. Neil Stacy plays the rich young buffer as a too-too-stuffy subaltern from a good regiment; one who, as a "masher" unfairly saddled with a virtuous woman, very decently rationalizes: "If you cannot control the thoughts that enter your mind, at least you can legalize them." As the legalized chorus girl Liz Robertson is less scatty than we had been led to expect, but after all she is destined to be the plain bluet philosopher (like the ex-shopgirl in the rather funnier *The Last of Mrs Cheyney*). Sylvia Syms self-sacrificingly plays the woman destined to be scorned; not for her an audacious exit line like "I shall go and find another co-respondent".

Saul Radomsky's art deco set is suitably squirm-making, with its touch of the legendary Miss Craneton's Tea-rooms. It cannot be easy to have sulks or tantrums on a high-backed chair by Charlie Randle Mackintosh. Perhaps the director, Patrick Garland, should have played down that over-symbolic caged canary ("kindly supplied" for recording purposes by Pet Pals of Guildford).

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 328  
Readers are invited to identify the source of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than May 29. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Enclis, marked "Author, Author 328" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Erlay House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 3BS. The solution and result will appear on June 5.

1 Here lies a most beautiful lady.  
2 Here lies the noble Warrior that over blunted sword.

3 Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth.

Competition No 324  
Winner: B. S. Smith.

Answers:  
1 The Skirrid (I like to repeat the name) was, it is true, at a distance, the aspect of a magnificent extinguisher, but when, after a bright, breezy walk

through laze and crowed, we had scrambled over the last of the thickly dowering hedges which lay around its shoulders like loosened strings of coral and began to ascend the grassy cone (very much in the attitude of Nebuchadnezzar), it proved as smooth as a garden mound.

Henry James, "English Vignettes", *English Hours*.

2 Aed be tho bare and high.  
Places of England, the Wiltshire Downs and the Long Mynd.  
Let the balls of my feet bounce on the turf, my face burn in the wind.  
My eyes have stung in the wind, and the deep like grey stones  
Humble my pretensions –  
Louisa MacNeice, "An Eclogue for Christmas".

3 To wait until next year's bloom at the end of the garden  
Poems to the Malvern Hills, like an inland sea.  
And to know that its fruit, dropping in autumn  
Will have yielded me  
John Betjeman, "Fruit".

## Using the Blues

Richard Davenport-Hines

ELMER RICE, LANGSTON HUGHES and  
WEILL  
Street Scene  
Palace Theatre

*Street Scene*, which had its British premiere on April 26, is a literary curiosity as well as a powerful experimental drama. It is based on an opera in Broadway vernacular. It is based on Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same title by Elmer Rice, which several composers hoped to adapt after its first production in 1929; but Rice refused to consider any libretto which departed far from his text, and it was only in 1946 that he reached agreement with Kurt Weill for an adaptation on those terms. Rice and Weill then approached the Harlem poet Langston Hughes to act as lyricist, and during 1946 the trio collaborated to perfect what Weill later called "a special brand of musical theatre which would completely integrate drama and music, poetry, word, song and movement".

Rice's original play was a piece of modern social realism set outside a New York tenement building during a heatwave. With a cast of sixty, it explored the lusts, greed, malice, frustration of the tenants and their neighbours, with a horrific climax in which a cuckolded husband murders his wife and her lover. Rice's original text was radical both in structure and in political implications, and his intentions with Weill were equally innovative.

Neither of them knew Langston Hughes before 1946, and their decision to enlist him was a declaration of their continued radicalism. From the 1920s Hughes had been writing the verse of simple diction and sharp visual imagery to create an urban black poetry free from European tradition. Verse collections such as *The Weary Blues* celebrated the rhythms of Harlem before the Second World War; he romanticized an underworld of crap games, midnight knifings, dawn shootings, jazz musicians, hookers and pimps. Hughes believed that the Blues music which inspired his verse expressed "all the laughter and pain, hope and heartache, search and reality of the Negro's life in this overdrive and makes compulsive and rambling reading, especially when you're supposed to be writing about it. Feeling that this in the vocabulary must be the nearest an Englishman can get to feeling American."

*Street Scene* is the holiday language, waiting to take over the world. The British dialect word "slag" meant both "a kind of projectile hurling weapon" and "the language of thieves and rascals". Since slag is a style of language having stronger emotive impact than the standard term "in order to express an attitude of contempt towards conventional order and authority", a "verbal slag" could hardly be more perfect metaphorically.

It is one of the beauties of this book that it makes you look under the surface of conventional speech to find the original slang metaphors still lurking. I had thought that the metaphorical use of slang was that it was intentionally picturesque. Pictureque metaphor may be a characteristic of slang, but this is due to the operetta's most beautiful passages, and the reminiscent of Puccini, "Remember that the Cream Sextet" suggests Hughes's love work on Wallace Stevens's "Empire of the Cream" as well as Weill parodying the language of Italian opera.

Weill's biographer Ronald Sanders writes that the effect of the double metaphor in *Street Scene* "is of individual tragedy merged into the tragedy of an entire community". It was therefore apt that this British premiere be organized as a one-night gala to benefit the London Lighthouse, the hospice and community care project, based in Notting Hill, for people with AIDS. The performance was directed by John Owen Edwards, who prevented some potentially awkward moments. The sensuous gaiety and explosive violence of *Street Scene* (1983) – comes A Tom Jobe's choreography were ideal. The book, which was interpreted by a leading American theatre company, is a valuable addition to the collection of the British University Press (287pp, £10.95). The collection seems to

## Signposting the taboo

Hugo Williams

ROBERT L. CHAPMAN (Editor)  
New Dictionary of American Slang  
4th edn. Macmillan. £16.95.  
0331 441257

It may not be quite true to say that all slang is American, but it is certainly possible to claim, as H. L. Mencken did in his study of the subject, *The American Language*, that all American is slang. Indeed, slang is the one untrammelled glory of that country, its gift to a greyer, older world that knows nothing of lung hantennae, porcelain hairnets and Jewish light-

ning. It is the most fertile time for slang, but the decade of the Second World War between Yanks and Limeys was all one way. No matter how John or Joe six-pack would have meant of going home saying "tummy" or "see-we" (the American idea of our slang) but they left behind a whole new world in slang, from guys and chicks and dudes and heads (from "broad in the beam"), ponytails and teenagers, hops and hamburgers and discs, though dating and parking and necking and going to steady, old lady and ex, to name only a few more ordinary stuff that we have swallowed whole as secondary slang.

Primary slang is the pristine speech of a sub-culture, like a hypnotic red triangle hovering permanently, like one's libido, in the top left-hand corner of the screen, a red rag to a bull. It even uses the same symbol, a little triangle, coyly referred to here as a "delta", to avoid any uncalculated metonymy. These little triangles or "impact symbols" are arranged on a two-tier principle, not unlike the old X and A ratings for films and exerting a similar attraction. They indicate the taboo (solid delta) and the merely vulgar (hollow delta). "Taboo terms are never to be used", pleads the editor, "and vulgar terms are to be used only when one is aware of and desires their strong effect." The system certainly serves to place the book in its period by conjuring up the period's prejudices and predilections.

Non-American readers may feel that some of the vulgarisms so designated are barely deserving of their stigmata. These are mostly sexual terms common in modern journalism and fiction, such as *knock up*, *knockers*, *hooters*, *breasts*, *nookie*, *rod-on*, *boinicy-boinicy*, *hooyoyoi*, *jailbait*, *kissass*, *nutty-nuts* and a succession of wild visions of the male member, such as *reliney*, *dork* and *johnson*. *Jellyroll* is a word for the female genitals, not, as I had thought, the male, which means that Mr Morton, the fast-living New Orleans pianist, was walking around town named after his satanism rather than his personal endowment. A *hootchee*, too, was a penis during the Korean war, but the *hootchee-kootchee* was an erotic dance in the late 1830s and the name of a song associated with the dancer Little Egypt at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

One of the most attractive features of this engrossing book is its choice of lip-smacking examples of slang usage from literature, after the manner of Dr Johnson, if from less lofty sources and for strictly non-prescriptive ends. "If you're up all night laying pipe you won't be worth shit to me on the court" – Tom Aldibrad (a much respected source); or "About eighty

in his review of *Fair of Speech*, a series of essays analysing "the uses of euphemism" edited by D. J. Enright (TLS, April 12, 1985) – William Burgess rejected as a "daffusion" the idea that the Victorian age invented the euphemism, and maintained that "a euphemism about words... is built into the human character". Whatever its origins, the practice certainly seems to have persisted in our own strenuously emancipated time, a sign of which is the steady interest shown by publishers in the subject.

Following in the footsteps of two recent, well-received dictionaries of euphemisms, *The New American Dictionary of Euphemisms* (1981) and Judith S. Newman and Charles G. Silver's *A Kind Word: A Dictionary of Euphemisms* (1983) – comes A *New Dictionary of American Slang and British Euphemisms*, edited by R. W. Holder and published by the British University Press (287pp, £10.95). The collection seems to

standard usages are just as picturesque, but we have forgotten their original metaphor through habitual use. Slang's *windbag*, for instance, is no more picturesque than the standard "fool", from the Latin *folia*, a bellows.

The editor of *American Slang*, Robert L. Chapman, PhD, is said to be an "avid collector" of slang; he is also a nervous chap, who appears anxious about the large collection of explosive and smutty material he has under his bed. He speaks apologetically in his preface of "uncouth language", "terms not to be used in polite society" and "all this nasty talk" which is "ekin to pomography". "Yes," he admits, "children will sneak off into corners with this book and find dirty words and have dirty thoughts..." Well, I'll be ding-swizzled if these aren't strange and dirty thoughts for a lexicographer to have. What is far more likely is that such genteel stammerings were concocted to mollify the Moral Majority lobby, who now have the power to prohibit anything they want, and would certainly do so here if they could pick up on a fraction of the seditious suggestions packed between its discreet maroon covers.

To this end, to butter up your born-again dickheads and blowtups, the editors have devised a wonderfully self-defeating system of self-censorship. This operates very much like the one adopted for sex and violence on Channel Four: a hypnotic red triangle hovering permanently, like one's libido, in the top left-hand corner of the screen, a red rag to a bull. It even uses the same symbol, a little triangle, coyly referred to here as a "delta", to avoid any uncalculated metonymy. These little triangles or "impact symbols" are arranged on a two-tier principle, not unlike the old X and A ratings for films and exerting a similar attraction. They indicate the taboo (solid delta) and the merely vulgar (hollow delta). "Taboo terms are never to be used", pleads the editor, "and vulgar terms are to be used only when one is aware of and desires their strong effect." The system certainly serves to place the book in its period by conjuring up the period's prejudices and predilections.

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have been designed to provide opportunity for serendipitous browsing rather than to meet a specific "information need". It is a fairly entertaining hodgepodge of the familiar and unfamiliar, and the illustrations are taken from an enterprisingly wide range of authors. There are quite a few items that most readers will never have come across before, and possibly could do without (for example, "*Abyssinian medall*" an undone and visible trouser fly-button"). There is some misspelling ("*houste cousin*"); occasional appalling contrivedness ("*twenty-four hour service*"); we have a telephone recording device; a misleading advertisement – annoying too, when used by a plumber and you have a burst pipe in the early hours"); and some puzzling inclusions which seem merely – like the previous example – to bespeak unhappy experience on the part of the compiler ("*Jehovah's sect*," an anti-clerical proselytizing [sic] sect. Much of their testifying is done unasked on other people's doorsteps..."). The dictionary has an extensive bibliography.

a them's gonna lay more tube than the mother-fucking Alaska Pipeline" – *Playboy* (also trusted). I think that explains *laying pipe* all right but I could find no listing for *dry goods*, as in "Put on your dry goods and cut" (William Burroughs).

I suppose children with limited sneaking-off time available will soon tire of the softer, hollow-delta words – "tits and zits" (teenage love and sex) – and progress to the harder stuff so thoughtfully and eye-catchingly sign-posted by the editors. Indeed, the casual sneaker-off becomes quickly addicted to these visual come-ons winking alongside entries and is soon looking for nothing else. In the case of teenagers, it would be a shame if, for this reason, they missed the totally un-triangular *fruit-salad party*, at which "adolescents experiment with drugs garnered from the family medicine cabinet".

"In this book terms of contempt and derision for racial or other groups have been included among the taboo terms" (solid delta) says the editor. But actually the only "other groups" are women, and, to a far lesser extent, men. Paradoxically, slang is both a boiling-pot of insurrection and anarchy and the rock-solid guardian of prejudice, as the many food words for women testify: *cookie*, *cup of tea*, *honey*, *peach*, *cheesecake*, *quail*, *nanote*, *sweetie pie*, *sugar*. Worse, many standard food words also mean money in non-standard use: *cabbage*, *kale*, *lettuce*. When a good egg brings home the bacon to his cupcake, or when a string bean of a sugar daddy takes his piece of barbecue out to get fried with his hard-earned kale, we can see that sex, money and food are inextricably and damningly tangled up in our vicious, sexist (male) subconscious. But what can you do? "Women have very little of their own slang", says Stuart Berg Flexner, in his preface.

The new words applied to women's clothing, hairstyles, homes, kitchen utensils and gadgets are usually created by men. Except when she accompanies her boyfriend or husband to his recreations, a woman seldom mingles with other groups. When women do

mingle outside of their own neighbourhood and family circles, they do not often talk of the outside world of business, politics, or other fields of general interest where new feminine names for objects, concepts and viewpoints could evolve.

This seems a bit extreme, but what slang has the women's revolution so far produced? Their vocabulary usually tends in the opposite direction entirely.

I searched in vain for taboo terms whose doorway sign were not trying to ward off the evil (and unprofitable) eye of sexism or racism or both. That common expressions such as *flying fuck* and *throw a bop* (sexual, not social) should be thus blacked give some idea of the book's commercial paranoia. "We have taken account of recent changes in the currency and acceptability of terms previously unspeakable and some may feel we have gone too far with this trend." Well, not when you've got a full impact symbol against *mind-fuck*, *sturfucker* and *cunt hair* I wouldn't.

The racist slang is another matter. *Jewish lightning* (that which causes buildings to burn so insurance can be collected) and *Mexican breakfast* (a cigarette and a glass of water) are tinged with affection and hardly "taboo". But then some races are more susceptible to racism than others. *Boogie*, *booi*, *boy*, *buck*, *burhend*, *chocolate drop*, *coon-head*, *darky*, *groid*, *hod*, *handkerchief-head*, *inky-tilik*, *poon tang*, *scuttle* and *schvartze* are just a handful of the terms of endearment used towards American blacks, who have always had to *suck hind tit* (a disadvantageous position).

*Boogie* and *boogie-woogie* originally meant advanced syllables. It would be interesting to know what slang is developing round the subject of AIDS, now that sufferers are increasingly having to resort to one another for company and sex. But these are early days. Strangely, the rather homely *hayateers* (whites), *bag-hoppers* (Irish) and *limeys* get a taboo sign, whereas *frog* and *eyete* are merely "vulgar" and *Yonk* is (interestingly) neither, with no attempt at its dim origins, except a

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## Perching or patrolling

Mark Ridley

J. A. SCOTT  
The Butterflies of North America  
583pp. Cornell University Press. £49.50.  
08047 12151

By 1710, when John Ray published his *Historia Insectorum*, most of the British butterflies were already known, but it was not until half a century later that the first North American species were described – Linnaeus described eighteen species, no doubt working with fairly well-travelled specimens. The North American butterfly fauna has now been well known for years, and Scott's book is a synthesis which contains no taxonomic novelties. He discusses the whole North American fauna, which he accounts at 679 species (for comparison, there are perhaps 17,750 butterfly species in the world, and the Collins guide for Britain and Europe lists 381 species); but he has to include some doubtful or rare migrants to reach 679. The 88 butterfly, for instance (so called because the pattern of pigmentation on the hind

wing clearly depicts the number 88 – or 89 in the specimen illustrated by Scott), is a tropical species which has been recorded three times in Florida, but, Scott concedes, "these seem to be airplane imports from S. Amer., not natives". The book contains a 100-page introduction to butterfly biology, keys (the subfamilial or tribal level) for caterpillars, chrysalises and adults, and an individual entry for each species. There are range maps and colour photographs (not paintings) of all the adults and of some caterpillars and eggs. The general introduction is, I think, unnecessarily long: Scott tries to write for the general reader and includes much elementary biology (the mechanism of insect flight and of heredity, for example); but he covers it too briefly for the beginner and it is useless for everyone else. He should have concentrated on butterflies.

The entry on each species contains notes on identification, food plants, life-history and reproductive habits – useful information when looking for butterflies because reproduction is the main purpose, and activity, of their adult lives. In some species, males "perch" on well-situated look-outs and fly out to inspect any fluttering passers-by. In others, males "patrol"

the general area used by the species and fly up to all moving objects that attract them. Their eyesight is imperfect, and males will approach quite inappropriate species, sexes and individuals, and even crude experimental models. Unreceptive females, however, can quickly deal with unwanted suitors: "Female... Coliadinae and Pierinae [the white butterflies] are distinguished by the unique, complex scent lobes on the abdomen; mated females display these lobes to repel other males." Their close relative the Dismorphiinae lack the lobes: "instead, they keep the abdomen between the closed wings, thereby preventing the male from joining. They may also fly vertically."

Scott also includes his observations on the problem of which sex flies, and which is towed, when a mating couple is disturbed. The subject, although of obscure importance, has recently fascinated lepidopterists. During the First World War, the rooms of the Entomological Society of London heard Carpenter and Poulton discuss this matter, and pass grave motions that lepidopterists must in future be less slapdash, and more accurately record which sex is the leading partner in the circumstances. For a century, blinking entomologists,

with notebook in one hand, have scribbled poked at coupled butterflies, and now at least the facts are out. Of the five butterfly families in Papilionidae "females generally fly when mating pair is startled"; in Pieridae "if the mating pair is disturbed, the male nearly always flies, towing the female who dangles behind in Hesperididae it is the female again, and Nymphalidae and Lycaenidae the different subgroups are more variable. What significance these observations have I do not know but the shade of Carpenter should now be peace.

Scott describes his book as a natural history and field guide. It is, I fear, too large for the entomological library. It is not unique – as Scott should have told his blurb-writer as a bibliographer about the similar book edited by W. H. Howe, *The Butterflies of North America* (1975). I only wish Scott could have included, for example, historians, critics and realists, and their respective *œuvres*; and synonyms of the formal names of species; the absence has already caused me difficulty as I have tried to collate his information with mine. But it is a book to welcome, not grumble about.

## Drawing flame

John R. G. Turner

BOB GIBBONS  
Dragonflies and Damselflies of Britain and Northern Europe  
144pp. Country Life. £12.95 (paperback, £7.95).  
0600 358411  
MICHAEL CHINERY  
Collins Guide to the Insects of Britain and Western Europe  
320pp. Collins. £10.95 (paperback, £6.95).  
0002191709

The days of sticking pins through insects – so that, as B. F. Pinkerton cynically explained to Cio-Cio-San, they shall not escape – are mercifully coming to an end. The field guides now being produced aim at the identification of the insect alive, in its natural posture, and perhaps even on the wing.

*Dragonflies and Damselflies of Western Europe* uses photographs of the living insects: the naturalist will be able to identify many species in the field without disturbing them. Anyone who wants to be really sure of the identification will still need to carry a net, a hand-lens and one of the works for specialists, but with delicate fingers ought to be able to release the captive relatively untraumatized afterwards. The only way to tackle some of the faster dragonflies is with a pair of binoculars and a set of field-skills allied to those of the bird-watcher.

## Raptor registers

Euan Dunn

BENNY GENSBOIL  
Collins Guide to the Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe, North Africa and the Middle East  
Translated by Gwynne Zeveloff  
384pp. Collins. £14.95.  
0002191768

Birds of prey, from the largest eagle to the smallest falcon, pose especially difficult problems of identification. Even within a species, plumage can vary markedly and flight silhouettes seem endlessly malleable. Learning one's way around Europe's thirty-eight raptors therefore calls for a special degree of application: the drama that attends the very sighting of any big raptor these days is heightened by the knowledge that it is probably a survivor against multiple odds. Many species are still beset by formidable man-made pressures, notably pesticides, hunting, and habitat loss. Britain and Western Europe are tackling many of their worst excesses with heartening results, but elsewhere many birds of prey continue to fare badly.

The standard text, *Flight Identification of*

*European Raptors* by R. F. Porter and colleagues, has a fine reputation as a bower of recognition skills, but the new Collins guide offers a broader treatment: in providing a more part of contemporary African literature, western Palaeolithic's forty-six species. The book falls into three parts. Several introductory chapters explore the biology of birds of prey and their bitter-sweet relations with man. Then follows the main text giving a detailed account of each species, with distribution maps, status and trends in each country, and in colour, and of uniformly excellent illustrations. The final section on identification gives the points of plumage, proportions, flight etc., and accomplished monochrome paintings by Bjørn Bertel depict the birds and their habits. The text is apparently written for the translation from the Danish: For example, the Buzzard is described as "Unglückselig" (unfortunate) and the Osprey is said to breed in "Shetland" (Scotland). With this caveat, the Collins guide is a worthy recruit to the new generation of field guides, catering for bird-watchers, naturalists and scholars.

## Borrowing and lending

Shirley Chew

WILLIAM H. WILDE, JOY HOOTON and BARRY CORRENS  
Oxford Companion to Australian Literature  
Oxford University Press. £30.  
0195239

*Oxford History of Australian Literature*, edited by Leo Kramer, was predominantly concerned with the task of reevaluation, placing perspective "the successes and failures of Australian writers up to the present", in the context of fiction, drama and poetry. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* is a reference work, intended to be of use to the general reader as well as to students of Australian literature. Its definitions of "author" and "literary work" are designedly broad so as to include, for example, historians, critics and realists, and their respective *œuvres*; and synonyms of the formal names of species; the absence has already caused me difficulty as I have tried to collate his information with mine. But it is a book to welcome, not grumble about.

It might be expected, there are substantial entries on the major literary figures, and while the emphasis falls on biographical and publication information, care has also been taken to create each author's achievement. Thus our entries on the well-crafted naturalist and Henry Lawson, the restless symbolism of Christopher Brennan, the "verbal brilliance" of Christina Stead, the "sensuality and emotional detachment" of A. D. Hope, the "creative energy" of Patrick White, the intense, searching lyricism of Judith Wright, the critical appraisals hold no surprises, they betray no falterings either, since it always the pictures were of dried specimens. Collins's new version of their *Guide to the Birds of Britain and Western Europe* by Michael Chinery has finally broken the mould: the paintings are mostly of naturally posed insects, giving the reader an insight into the extraordinary beauty of their camouflage patterns, which are negated or disrupted when the wings are spread in a preserved specimen. Most groups come in for this naturalistic treatment, while only a small proportion of the 1000 species of insect found in Western Europe are portrayed, the book will give an approximate identification of most of those larger and more spectacular ones which are liable to come to the attention of the general naturalist. Birders will find a useful "eliminator" of common crawling insects which are not insects, and I can imagine even a professional who would not want to have this book close at hand. The illustrations are magnificent: surely the Collins field guides as works of art.

At times, because more open-ended, the entries on the younger generation of writers who started to make a reputation for themselves in the late 1960s and the 1970s – J. K. Koch, Fay Zwicky, David Malouf, Peter Carey, to mention a few. While some of these writers have published new work since the cut-off date for this *Oxford Companion*, the end of 1983 and titles such as *The Invention of Solitude* and *The Anxious Cannibal* and *Ily-*

## Reclaiming the mother tongue

Minweizui

NGUGI WATHIONGO  
Reclaiming the Mind  
James Currey/Helmemann.  
Paperback, £4.95.  
0002191768

Ngugi thought it self-evident that the literature people should be written in its own language, then you must wonder why the pre-history and in extending coverage to all the western Palaeolithic's forty-six species. The book falls into three parts. Several introductory chapters explore the biology of birds of prey and their bitter-sweet relations with man. Then follows the main text giving a detailed account of each species, with distribution maps, status and trends in each country, and in colour, and of uniformly excellent illustrations. The final section on identification gives the points of plumage, proportions, flight etc., and accomplished monochrome paintings by Bjørn Bertel depict the birds and their habits. The text is apparently written for the translation from the Danish: For example, the Buzzard is described as "Unglückselig" (unfortunate) and the Osprey is said to breed in "Shetland" (Scotland). With this caveat, the Collins guide is a worthy recruit to the new generation of field guides, catering for bird-watchers, naturalists and scholars.

announced in a statement which opens the book.

Even in colonial days, Africans wrote literary works in African languages. But such works have always remained outside the mainstream of official culture. Among Africa's post-independence writers, several others preceded Ngugi in writing in their mother tongues. The best known of these was the late Okot p'Bitek whose works, including his famous *Song of Lawino*, were composed in Acholi, and then translated by him into English.

In a poignant passage, Ngugi recounts how he was wooed by a village woman who said "We hear you have a lot of education and that you write books. Why don't you and others of your kind give some of that education to the village? We don't want the whole amount; just a little of it, and a little of your time." His yielding to that appeal landed him in jail and exile. Other African writers have been jailed – for interventions in political disputes and for being associated with coups – but Ngugi was probably the first to be jailed by an African government for his use of an African language to produce a play for an African audience.

The kind of conversion Ngugi chronicles in his books shows that, even in the face of official hostility, African writers can catalyse the transformation from colonial language literature, not only by campaigns to change educational criteria, but also by building up a body of works in African languages that the state cannot continue to ignore. Ngugi's presentation of the case suffers from a romanticization of the peasantry. It is as if African culture is an exclusively peasant affair. One wonders whether the traditional rural

its generous borrowings, its adaptation to indigenous uses of words belonging to the parent form and other national varieties, its invention of lively vocabulary and idioms. Not surprisingly, the borrowings from Aboriginal – for example, kangaroo, dingo, waratah, cooe, billabong, corroboree – relate in the main to natural features and to the culture of the first inhabitants. Terms already familiar in British English were variously transformed once they were introduced into the new environment. "Squatter", for example, turned respectable in the Australia of the 1840s and, casting off its original reference to a convict who settled on unoccupied land, acquired the non-pejorative meaning of "grazier" or "pastoralist". "Bushranger", on the other hand, ceased to denote an official employed to work in the unsettled, forested areas of the Colony, and came to mean a runaway convict or outlaw in hiding in the bush. Today, it has the general sense of a manipulative or exploitative person.

The language items are among the best entries. Australian English grew out of the need to name and fill a vast, alien landscape, and its vitality and resourcefulness are evident from

elites – with their kings and chiefs and courtiers and title-borders and nobles – had absolutely nothing to do with the creation of orature and literature in African languages, or with their survival to this day. This misleading bit of Marxist class hegemony aside, Ngugi's book remains invaluable as an African intellectual's account of his withdrawal from the Eurocentric culture of the neo-colonial state in which he was nurtured.

Like other languages, Australian English is rich in derogatory terms for strangers and outsiders. In this century, "pom" or "pommie" is widely used to denote an immigrant or visitor from England, but in the nineteenth century many more colourful expressions were to hand: "colonial experience", "remittance man", "new chum". Out of regional prejudice came "Vandemonian" to mean a person from Tasmania, once Van Diemen's Land, or an ex-convict from the island. "Gumsucker" was a resident of Victoria, and "songdropper" is still used to refer to a person from Western Australia, since in the eyes of the Easterner the West is infertile territory. But perhaps there is no word so succinctly abusive as "rock-chopper", which Edmund Campion has used in the title of his collection of essays, *Rock-Choppers: Growing up Catholic in Australia*. Derived from the initials RC, it is also a Protestant reference to Irish-Australian Catholic convict origins.

A firm grasp of history and its vital relationship with the present lies behind entries on general topics such as "Transportation", "War Literature" and "Criticism", and their meticulous cross-references which open up numerous lines of inquiry throughout the volume. Thus it is possible to move from an account of the painter Sidney Nolan to the Ned Kelly story and further on again to "Folk-Song and Ballad" and "Bushranging in Australian Literature"; or to begin very early on in the alphabet with "Aboriginal in Australian Literature" and to be led to a consideration of some of the forces which have gone into the making of modern Australian literature.

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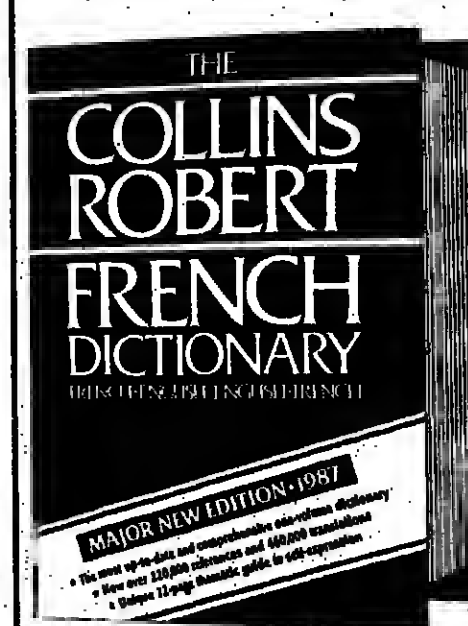
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**1522 and 1527)**  
271pp. Duckworth. £35.  
0 7156 1990 X

In February 1516, Erasmus published, on two of Froben's presses in Basle, the *Novum Instrumentum*, of which one part contained, in two columns, the Greek text and his own Latin version of the New Testament, the other part his *Annotaciones*, intended to explain his deviations from the traditional Vulgate. In six months of intensive proof-reading and extensive correcting, Erasmus did what publishers always fear most, namely, tripled the size of his *Annotaciones*. The first edition, of 1,200 copies, was completed just in time for the book fair at Frankfurt on March 23. Though Erasmus dedicated the work to Pope Len X, he realized quite clearly that this publication would seem to "tinker with the sacred text itself": academic theology, liturgical prayers and medieval hymns had been based on the hallowed Latin version for over a thousand years.

By carefully distinguishing and designating the different chronological layers of that part of the *Annotations* which concerns the four Gospels, Dr Reeve allows us for the first time to trace the development of this debate, and to weigh the merits of arguments and counter-arguments. Additions and deletions in the successive editions of 1519, 1522, 1527 and finally 1535 show the precise course of Erasmus's battle with what he calls "the dumb scholastic theologians who believe that innovation is heresy". But far more becomes visible now what we are in a position to read the *Annotations* with a firm grasp of their historical sequence. From the very outset, Erasmus was himself dissatisfied with what he had produced in such great haste, and simultaneously with the completion of his formidable seven-volume edition of the works of Jerome. He continued to search for better Greek manuscripts and to ponder single clauses and concepts in the New Testament, criticizing himself nearly as sharply as his opponents.

Beyond the debate about textual variants, see Erasmus reacting to the ever-widening rift that was to separate the two major religious traditions in the West. Though seldom referring explicitly to the Reformation move-

It is therefore quite appropriate that M. A. Screech, in his substantial and eloquent introduction, characterizes the *Annotations* as "a kind of spiritual and scholarly diary" – which future biographers will have to read in parallel with the invaluable edition of Erasmus's letters by P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1906–47). Since the now dated *Leiden* edition of the *Opera Omnia* presents the *Annotations* only in

## Devoutly dissatisfied

**R. EMMET McLAUGHLIN**  
**Caspar Schwenckfeld, Reluctant Radical: His**  
**Life to 1540**  
 250pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
 0300 033672

**IRVIN BUCKWALTER HORST (Editor)**  
**The Dutch Dissenters: A critical companion to**  
**their history and ideas**  
 233pp. Leiden: Brill. Hfl 96.  
 004 07454 6

In 1519, at the age of thirty, Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig was converted from being an indifferent and anticlerical Catholic into a fervent Protestant. He was a valuable acquisition for the cause of the Reformation: a member of a noble and illustrious family of Silesia, a man of wealth and influence. He had served at the court of two local princes, and subsequently joined that of Friedrich II von Liegnitz, the most powerful ruler in the area. In his early years as a Protestant, Schwenckfeld could all he could for Lutheranism. He started to evangelize his own estates, abolishing a number of Catholic ceremonies in the parish churches; he encouraged the formation of those bible-studying communities which later became the core of the movement associated with his name; and he successfully pressed the Duke of Liegnitz to establish Protestantism in Silesia.

Schwencfeld had received a humanistic education in German universities and throughout his life he shared the tendency of Erasmus and the later humanists to lay a stronger emphasis on spiritual conversion and moral improvement than on external changes. He insisted on the importance of education as

Traditionally, Renaissance scholarship has found the significance of Erasmus's New Testament in his publication of the Greek text. It is quite clear from the *Annotatio*es themselves, however, that for Erasmus the Greek "original" is only the point of departure for his real concern, the new Latin translation, which must be supported by documentary evidence and defended. But there are also other crucial questions for which Anne Reeve's edition allows an answer, one of which deserves special mention. In the catalogue for the Erasmus exhibition at the Historisches Museum in Basle (April 26–September 7, 1986), one item (C13) is confidently described as a single page of the "Erste Neübersetzung", supposedly the bold first draft by Erasmus, made in England well before the first Basle edition. It is this version

means of spreading the Protestant faith, and one of the reasons for his disappointment with Lutheranism was the persistent ignorance of the clergy. He also came to disagree with Luther over the Eucharist, and his dissatisfaction was intensified by a journey to Wittenberg in 1525, when Luther perceived the subversive elements in Schwenckfeld's teaching.

The last part of Schwenckfeld's life – he died in Ulm in 1561 – was spent wandering through Germany. As he travelled, he encountered the many victims of Protestant and Catholic intolerance. He sympathized with, but could not join, the Anabaptists. He was influenced by the Spanish physician Michael Servetus, who was later burnt in Calvin's Geneva for his views on the Trinity. He became an intimate friend of the German "apiritualist" Sebastian Franck, and his circle of correspondents extended throughout Northern Europe. The champion of a highly individual form of Christianity, a dauntless defender of toleration, Schwenckfeld was a prolific writer and an able exploiter of the printing press. He acquired a growing number of followers. Quarrelling with his ecclesiastical authorities, he found his most enthusiastic supporters, who included a remarkably high proportion of women, in the lower ranks of society, among prosperous mer-

hans, magistrates, courtiers, officers and members of the nobility. Although they refused to participate in the sacraments, the Confessors of the Glory of Christ, as the Schwentkelders called themselves, were ready to attend the religious services of any confession and came to form one of those

One must hope that, with some three further volumes, all Erasmus's *Annotations* will soon be available, allowing us to study the whole work in its fascinating historical perspective. One serious complaint is in order: the pages have been so reduced in size that it took me as much time to read the *Gospels* section, with its small letters and tiny signs, as it took Erasmus in the winter of 1515-16 to prepare for the printing of the complete *Annotations*. In the interest of future readers' time and eyesight, the original ample folio size should be chosen as a more suitable format. But with this said, I do not hesitate to conclude with a most un-*Erasmian*, because un-European, commendation: the tradition of British Erasmus scholarship – which earlier in this century reached and ranged from the two Allens to Margaret Mann-Phillips, but then migrated to Amsterdam and Toronto, has with this magnificent enterprise returned to British shores.

demites, which caused such anxiety to the Reformed Churches.

In *Caspar Schwenckfeld, Reluctant Radical: His Life to 1540*, R. Emmet McLaughlin emphasizes his subject's early Lutheranism and shows how gradual his abandonment of Luther was. McLaughlin, who is thoroughly acquainted with Schwenckfeld's voluminous output, is convincing in this, and his book would be of still greater use had he continued the life beyond 1540. His treatment of Schwenckfeld's personality, on the other hand, is disappointing. There have been few works on Schwenckfeld in English and it is unfortunate that this intriguing Silesian nobleman should not be introduced to the English-speaking world with greater elegance. To be sure that Schwanckfeld's restraint "tends to breed an air of unreality about the man and his writings, something like watching a virtuoso television scene with the sound turned off" is hardly the best way of capturing the combination of piety and worldliness which made Schwenckfeld so attractive to his contemporaries.

The Anabaptist heritage is really more difficult to cope with. Ever since the mid-sixteenth century, assembled under the leadership of Menno Simons and his successors, the spiritual descendants of the first Anabaptists have acquired a justifiable reputation for their Christian way of life and their rejection of violent war. Yet a religious community which has agreed to disarm governments with its members' refusal to bear arms was directly involved, at the beginning of its history, in one of the most sanguinary episodes of the time – the rise and fall of 1534–5 of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster in that New Jerusalem where wives and property were shared and where those who objected were summarily put to death. The extreme was carried out by the monarch of Münster, the elder tailor Jan Beukels, and the massacre of his followers when the town was recaptured by the troops of his rightful bishop, soon formed a warning, cited by one theologian after another, against fanaticism and Messianism, to discredit heterodox movements and to establish a peace-loving followers.

*In The Dutch Dissenters*, edited by the two Dutchswalter Horst, the authors of the two essays explore the medieval traditions of dissent and Melchior Hoffman's chiliasm and the degree of continuity between the millenarianism which surrounded the Münster rebellion and Simons's eschatology. They examine the social structure of Dutch Anabaptism and various attempts to reorganize it after Münster. Some of the papers would have been better translated, but others, particularly those of Walter Klaassen, Werner Staecker, Hans-Jürgen Stäcker, and Hans-Jürgen Stäcker, are good examples of the quality of the editing.

Outlining a science of feeling

...and another shock would follow"), but that is different from being "afraid to press the button" because a shock will follow. A difference in the contingencies is unmistakable. Young behaviourists sometimes contribute to the confusion by using the word "fear" as a synonym for "fearful", relevant here, when they mean "fearful of" or "fearful of something". For example, themselves saying that something pleases or makes them angry and are embarrassed about having said it. The etymology of embarrassment as a kind of fear is significant. The young behaviourists find themselves barred from speaking freely about their feelings because those who have misunderstood their behaviourism have ridiculed them when they have done so. An analysis of how embarrassment feels, made without alluding to antecedents or consequences, would be difficult if not impossible, but the contingencies are clear. In general, the more subtle the state, the greater the advantage in turning to the analysis.

...analysis has an important bearing on the practical questions: how much can we ever know about what another person is feeling, how can what it felt be changed? It is not possible to ask other people how or what they feel because the words they will use in telling us are acquired as we have seen, from people who do not quite know what they were talking

also come from another word that meant

But how much like the effect of the word was the bodily state the word was used to evoke? All words for feelings seem to operate as metaphors, and it is significant that metaphor has always been from public to private. No word seems to have originated as a word of a feeling.

It is not need to use the names of feelings that leads us directly to the public events. Instead of saying "I was angry", we can say, "I have struck him". What was felt was an impulse to strike rather than striking, but the impulse stimuli must have been much the same. The way to report what we feel is to say what is likely to generate the feeling. After reading Chapman's translation of Homer for the first time, Keats related that he felt "like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken". It is easier for his readers to feel what an astronomer would feel upon discovering a new planet than what Keats felt upon reading the

sometimes said that we can nuke direct  
 with what other people feel through  
 or empathy. Sympathy seems to be  
 for painful feelings; we sympathize  
 person who has lost a fortune but not  
 we who has made one. When we  
 are, we are said to project our feelings  
 person, but we cannot actually be  
 feelings about, because we also project  
 things - when, for example, we com-  
 public fallacy. What wa feel of Lear's  
 quite what we feel in a raging storm.  
 and empathy seem to be effects of  
 For genetic or personal reasons we  
 what other people are doing and we  
 have similar bodily states to feel.  
 we do what other things are doing, it is  
 that we are sharing feelings.  
 and empathy cannot tell us exactly  
 person feels, because part of what is  
 upon the setting in which the be-  
 occurs, and that is usually missing in  
 When lysergic acid diethylamide  
 attracted attention, psychiatrists were  
 used in order to see what it felt like  
 psychotic, but acting like a psychotic  
 one has taken a drug may not create  
 felt by those who are psychotic

Feelings are most easily changed by changing the settings responsible for what is felt. We could have relieved the anxiety of our rat by turning off the tone. When a setting cannot be changed, a new history of reinforcement may change its effect. In his remarkable book *Émile*, Rousseau described what is now called desensitization. If a baby is frightened when plunged into cold water (presumably an innate response), begin with warm water and reduce the temperature a degree a day. The baby will not be frightened when the water is finally cold. Something of the sort could also be done, said Rousseau, with social reactions. If a child is frightened by a person wearing a threatening mask, begin with a friendly one and change it slightly day by day until it becomes threatening, when it will not be frightening.

Psychoanalysis is largely concerned with discovering and changing feelings. An analysis sometimes seems to work by extinguishing the effects of old punishments. When the patient discovers that obscene, blasphemous, or aggressive behaviour is tolerated, the therapist emerges as a non-punitive audience. Behaviour "repressed" by former punishments then begins to appear. It "becomes conscious" simply in the sense that it begins to be felt. The once offending behaviour is not punished, but it is also not reinforced, and it eventually undergoes extinction, a less troublesome method of eradication than punishment.

Cognitive psychologists are among those who most often criticize behaviourism for neglecting feelings, but they themselves have done very little in the field. The computer is not a helpful model. Cognitive psychologists specialize in the behaviour of speakers and listeners. Instead of arranging contingencies of reinforcement, they often simply describe them. Instead of observing what their subjects do, they often simply ask them what they would probably do. But the kinds of behaviour most often associated with feelings are not easily brought under verbal control. "Cheer up" or "Have a good time" seldom works. Only operant behaviour can be executed in response to advice, but if it occurs only for that reason, it has the same shortcomings as imitative behaviour. Advice must be taken and reinforcing consequences must follow before the bodily condition that is the intended effect of the advice will be felt. If consequences do not immediately follow, the advice ceases to be taken or the behaviour remains nothing more than taking advice.

Fortunately, not everything we feel is troublesome. We enjoy many states of our bodies, and because they are positively reinforcing, do what is needed to produce them. We read books and watch television and, to the extent that we then tend to behave as the characters behave, we feel and possibly enjoy relevant bodily states. Drugs are taken for positively reinforcing effects (but the reinforcement is negative when they are taken primarily to relieve withdrawal symptoms). Religious mystics cultivate special bodily states — by fasting, remaining still or silent, reciting mantras, and so on. Dedicated joggers often report a *joie de vivre* high.

To confine an analysis of feelings to what is felt may seem to neglect an essential question: what is *feeling*, simply as such? We can ask a similar question about any sensory process—for example, what is *seeing*? Philosophers and cognitive psychologists avoid that question by contending that to see something is to make some kind of copy—a “representation”, to use the current word. But making a copy cannot be seeing, because the copy must in turn be seen. Nor is it enough, of course, to say simply that seeing is behaving; it is only part of behaving. It is “behaving up to the point of acting”. Unfortunately, what happens up to that point is out of reach of the instruments and methods of the

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# TLS Listings

A comprehensive weekly selection of new and forthcoming books received by the TLS

behaviour analyst and must be left to the physiologist. What remains for the analyst are the contingencies of reinforcement under which things come to be seen and the verbal contingencies under which they come to be described. In the case of feeling, both the conditions felt and what is done in feeling them must be left to the physiologist. What remains for the behaviour analyst are the genetic and personal histories responsible for the bodily conditions the physiologist will find.

There are many good reasons why people talk about their feelings. What they say is often a useful indication of what has happened to them or of what they may do. On the point of offering a friend a glass of water, we do not ask, "How long has it been since you last drank any water?" or "If I offer you a glass of water, what are the chances you will accept it?" We ask "Are you thirsty?" The answer tells us all we need to know. In an experimental analysis, however, we must have a better account of the conditions that affect hydration and a better measure of the probability that a subject will drink. A report of how thirsty the subject feels will not suffice.

For at least 3,000 years, however, philosophers, joined recently by psychologists, have looked within themselves for the causes of their behaviour. For reasons which are becoming clear, they have never agreed upon what they have found. Physiologists, and especially neurologists, look at the same body in a different and potentially successful way, but even when they have seen it more clearly, they will not have seen initiating causes of behaviour. What they will see must in turn be explained by ethologists, who look for explanations in the evolution of the species, or by behaviour analysts, who look at the histories of individuals. The inspection or introspection of one's own body is a kind of behaviour that needs to be analysed, but as the source of data for a science it is largely of historical interest only.

C. B. F. Skinner

The TLS Listings provides full publication details of those books received each week by the TLS which seem to fall within the main interests of our readers. Children's books, foreign-language books and paperback reprints of recent works are not, however, included. Publishers are asked to ensure that they let us have all the necessary information, including price and publication date.

## Anthropology

Holy, Ladislav, *editor Comparative Anthropology* Oxford: Blackwell, 252pp. £25.00 0 631 15155 9. 23/87.

## Archaeology

Arvid, Nahman Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 139pp., illus. \$20.95 221 006 4.

## Architecture

Brunkhill, R. W. *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties (A Field Handbook)* Fother, 164pp., illus. £8.95 (paperback). 0 571 09459 7. 11/87.

Stalley, Roger *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland: An account of the history, art, and architecture of the white monks in Ireland from 1142-1540* Yale UP, 259pp., illus. £25.40 0 506 03737 6. 21/87.

## Art

Claesen, Meredith L. *Frantz Jourdain and the Symbolists: Art Nouveau theory and criticism* London: E. J. Brill, 330pp., illus. Hfl. 132/80. 90 04 07879 7.

Gentleman, David *A Special Relationship* Faber, 164pp., illus. £8.95 (paperback). 0 571 14992 8. 11/87.

Kuryluk, Ewa *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex: The grotesque: Origins, iconography, techniques* Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 371pp., illus. \$45.00 (hardcover). \$21.95 (paperback). 0 8101 0739 2 (h.c.). 0 8101 0740 0 (pb.). 15/87.

## Bibliography

Copier, William, edited by Stanton J. Linden *A Catalogue of Chymical Books, 1673-88* New York: Garland, 159pp., \$37.00 0 8240 8357 4. 4/87.

Finch, S. *Jeremiah A Catalogue of the Libraries of Sir Thomas Browne and Dr Edward Browne, his Son: A facsimile reproduction* Leiden: E. J. Brill / Leiden UP, 177pp. Hfl. \$23/75. 90 04 07920 3.

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## THE TIMES

### The promised land?

The children born during or just after the Second World War are rising to positions of power all around the world. In *Roosevelt's Children*, Edward Mortimer argues that they are in danger of taking for granted the post-war system planned by the great American president: two super-powers, a trading system based on the dollar, a world of independent nation-states. Jonathan Meades reviews the book in *The Times* next Thursday.



...and regularly in *The Times*, Philip Howard (left) on words, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, Irving Wardle at the theatre, John Clare on education, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Geoffrey Smith on politics, Peter Ackroyd on books, Barbara Amiel's viewpoint, Clifford Longley on the Church, the humour of Mel Calman and Barry Fantoni, John Higgins at the opera, Jonathan Meades on eating out, David Robinson on the cinema, David Sinclair on rock... and much more each week

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Armstrong, Louis *Satchmo: My life in New Orleans* (1st pub. in US 1954) New York: Da Capo, 240pp. \$9.95 (paperback). 0 306 80276 7.

Barnes, Trevor *Terry Waite: Man with a mission* Pomona, 142pp. £2.00/Cas\$5.95 (paperback). 0 00 67235 3. 14/87.

Bates, R. E. *The Vanished World: An autobiography of childhood and youth* Robinson, 189pp. £3.95 (paperback). 0 948164 24 7. 21/87.

Biddle, William G. James *Naylor 1618-1660: The Quaker indicted by Parliament* York: Sassone, 240pp. £9.90 (paperback). 1 85072 015 0 (pb.). 24/87.

Kost, Joachim C., translated by Richard and Clara Winston *Hilfer* (1st pub. in UK 1974) Widenfeld and Nicolson, 844pp. £8.95 (paperback). 0 297 78340 0. 28/87.

Greenhouse, Brereton *A Battle of Pebbles: The First World War diaries of two Canadian airmen* (Monograph 4) Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 365pp. 0 660 12239 1.

Hallmann, R. A. J. John Weaver: A biography of a literary associate of Shakespeare and Jonson (The Revels Plays Companion Library) Manchester UP, 154pp. £27.50 0 7190 2217 7. 23/87.

Ruot, R. C., and Bernard Norling *Behind Japanese Lines: An American guerrilla in the Philippines* Lexington: Kentucky UP, 258pp., illus. £14.95. 0 8151 1041 X. 3/87.

Lo, Ruth *Barashaw, and Katharine S. Kinderman in the Eye of the Typhoon: An American woman to China during the Cultural Revolution* (1st pub. in US 1980) New York: Da Capo, 200pp., illus. £10.95 (paperback). 0 306 80283 X.

Major, Norma Joan *Sutherland Macdonald* 215pp., illus. £12.95. 0 330 12695 5. 21/87.

Muir, Edwin *An Autobiography* (1st pub. 1954) Hogarth, 281pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 7012 0770 1. 7/87.

Norman, Diana *Terrible Beauty: A life of Constance Mackenzie, 1868-1927* Hodder and Stoughton, 320pp. £14.95. 0 340 39523 7. 18/87.

Pearson, Hesketh *Conno Doyle* (1st pub. 1943) Allen and Unwin, 193pp., illus. £6.95 (paperback). 0 04 928071 6. 30/87.

Pearson, Hesketh *Bernard Shaw* (1st pub. 1942) Allen and Unwin, 520pp., illus. £8.95 (paperback). 0 04 928072 4. 30/87.

Thomas, Donald *Cardigan: The hero of Balaclava* (1st pub. 1974) Routledge and Kegan Paul, 349pp. £7.95 (paperback). 9 7102 1205 4. 21/87.

Towkiler, Mike *On Wing and Wild Winter* Cape, 239pp., illus. £10.95. 9 224 02825 1. 30/87.

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Zimmerman, Moshe Wilhelm *Marr: The patriarch of anti-semitism* (Studies in Jewish History) Oxford UP, 178pp. £17.50. 0 19 504005 8. 7/87.

## Business

Hallward, David *The Reckoning: A tale of two cultures as seen through two companies* Bloomsbury / New York: Morrow, 722pp. £15. 0 7475 0018 5. 0 688 04838 2. 30/87.

## Economics

Burton, John *Keynes's General Theory: Fifty years on* Institute of Economic Affairs, 159pp. £3.50 (paperback). 0 257 56197 1.

Dayo, Frederic C. *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 252pp. \$32.95 (hardcover). \$14.25 (paperback). 0 8014 1948 4 (h.c.). 9 8014 1949 4 (pb.). 14/87.

Hutton, Will *The Revolution that Never Was: An assessment of Keynesian economics* Longman, 229pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 582 29603 X.

World Commission on Environment and Development *Our Common Future* Oxford UP, 383pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 19 282088 X. 27/87.

Doig, Robert A. *The European Past: Social evolution and spatial order* (Critical Human Geography series) Macmillan, 403pp. £30 (hardcover). £10.95 (paperback). 0 333 28107 1 (h.c.). 0 333 28108 8 (pb.). 11/87.

## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of May 8, 1937, carried a review by H. O'Neill of Wyndham Lewis's *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive* or a new war in the making, from which the following extracts are taken:

Mr Wyndham Lewis has followed up his 'Left Wings over Europe' by an even more daring, brilliant and challenging political essay. His method is to report the 'thinking aloud' of the cheerful middle-headed Leavisite Nidwit. Of course he is dead. A pity, but one must not ask too much. ... He was typical of the simple-hearted plumbman, as simple-hearted as the average man to be met in a public house. 'Pubs and clubs, both immemorial institutions in England, are everywhere together' and Leavisite not only a widely distributed type, but also a subject of Leavisite's thinking. ... he would have been irresistibly

## Fiction

Altko, Joan *Deception* Gallancz, 288pp. £10.95. 0 575 04062 2. 21/87.

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Carter, Angus *Fireworks*, revised edition (1st pub. 1974) Chato and Windus, 120pp. £10.05. 0 7011 3215 9. 11/87.

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Fest, Howard *The Diner Party* Hodder and Stoughton, 250pp. £10.95. 0 340 41072 1. 18/87.

Laurence, Margaret, afterword by Coral Ann Howie *A Feast of God* (Modern Classics, 252; 1st pub. 1964) Virago, 213pp. £3.95 (paperback). 0 86068 817 4. 14/87.

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Sennett, Richard *Palais-Royal* Faber, 274pp. £10.95. 0 571 14718 6. 11/87.

Smith, Ken *A Book of Chinese Whispers* Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe, 149pp., illus. £3.95 (paperback). 0 906427 95 2. 14/87.

Stevens, Gordon *Pease on Earth* Hodder and Stoughton, 382pp. £11.95. 9 340 39237 1. 18/87.

Webster, Lyn *The Illumination of Alice J.* Cunniffham Dedalus, 9 St Stephen's Terrace, London SW8 1DL. 304pp. £9.95. 0 946626 13 4. 28/87.

Wood, Ira *The Kibbush Man* Pen, 254pp. £2.95 (paperback). 0 330 29746 5. 8/87.

**Fiction in English translation** Deledda, Grazia, translated by M. G. Siegmund *Madre* (The Woman and the Priest) Dedalus, 9 St Stephen's Terrace, London SW8 1DL. 294pp. £9.95 (paperback). 0 946626 20 0. 28/87.

**History, ancient** Mazar, Benjamin *The Burial Biblical Period: Historical studies* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 266pp., illus. £1.95 221 005 6.

Sperber, Daniel *Nautica Talmudica* (Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture) Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University / Leiden: E. J. Brill, 180pp. Hfl. \$33/87. 75. 90 04 08240 2.

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